

Relaxed leading man awaits final curtain

SOMETHING had changed in John Major's manner at Prime Minister's Questions yesterday. He was not dejected, as he had seemed last Thursday before the votes at Wirral South were counted. But neither was he gung-ho and punching his way out of a corner, as he can surprise us by doing.

He was simply relaxed. Almost aimless, at times. The Prime Minister rambled his way through a series of unenlightening answers to low-grade questions, more than once losing his grammatical thread. He was going through the motions.

Though it must have been one of the last Question Times for this Parliament and Government, the session was

curiously lacking in tension. Only on the first question did hiccups rise. It came from Nicholas Budgen (C), the man who succeeded Enoch Powell as MP for Wolverhampton SW. Mr Budgen declared that "strict control of immigration" was the key to good race relations and that Labour planned to relax this control. He invited Mr Major to comment.

Briefly, the mood turned ugly. A group of Labour backbenchers shouted with real fury at Budget: "Desperate! Disgraceful!" When the Prime Minister rose there was a sudden and total hush. What would he say?

Major, speaking steadily and calmly, said he was not going to lend his voice to

anything that imperilled improving race relations. There was a moment of silence as he sat down.

The tone was fastidious, decent and proper, though it was not immediately clear to me that Mr Major's answer was intended to slap Nicholas Budgen down. But it may well have been and that is how MPs took it. Rising next, Tony Blair remarked, generously: "I think the Prime Minister deserves credit for that answer."

The remaining questions and answers failed to match the stature of this short inter-

lude. The Labour leader repeated his litany about "20,000 fewer nurses, 50,000 more managers" in the NHS. In a faintly weary riposte, the PM complained that "for the last five years we have had nothing but opposition" from the ... then reflected (perhaps) that "... nothing but opposition from the Opposition" would invite the response: "Well they would, wouldn't they?"

"Nothing but opposition from the ... Labour Party," he continued. Phew! Blair tried to goad Major

into commenting on his Health Secretary's recent excursion into the single currency debate, but Major was not goaded.

Stephen Dorrell had been "an outstanding Health Secretary," he said simply, failing to summon enough enthusiasm for Dorrell seriously to dent the latter's hopes of becoming party leader.

Labour's David Winnick (Walsall N) — one of those gnarly political irritants who ironbunchers keep swatting but never quite squash — bit Mr Major on the ear with a question about the funding of the Tory party. Major, looking bored, directed his answer to the funding of Mr Blair's office.

Eric Illesley (Barnsley Cen-

tral) quoted to the Prime Minister the opinion of Lord Tebbit on the Deputy Prime Minister, sitting beside him. Michael Heseltine was "tasteless, tacky ... and self-centred". Mr Heseltine lounged back on his bench looking rather flattered.

Earlier, I had watched the Environment Secretary, the John Gummer, answering what was almost certainly the final session of Environment Questions before the election. For you and me, it was simply another Environment Questions.

For Mr Gummer, 57, the bitter-sweet sensation of standing, perhaps for the last time in his career, at a government dispatch box.

Woman shot in the head on golf course

A woman was in a serious condition after being shot in the head while teeing off on the seventeenth hole of a golf course yesterday. Her husband was arrested 15 minutes later and six miles away after crashing his car and is being treated in another hospital in Shropshire for the effects of drugs, police said. The 53-year-old woman was playing with friends at Market Drayton Golf Course.

Inspector Geoff Harding, of Shrewsbury police, said: "A man was hiding in undergrowth and fired several shots at her before leaving the club." The woman whose name was not immediately released, was shot once in the head and twice in the right side of her body. She was taken to the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford. Police said her injuries were serious but not life-threatening.

Council wins £20m

A judge ruled in the Court of Appeal that the Environment Department must pay the north London borough of Camden an extra £20.9 million in housing subsidy. The Labour-controlled council had argued that there had been a shortfall in its subsidy because of a technical change in its accounting recommended by chartered accountants. The department is considering an appeal to the Lords.

Mountain railway plan

Plans for Britain's first Alpine-style mountain railway are back on track after Scottish Natural Heritage lifted its objections to the £16.5 million development up the side of Cairn Gorm, near Aviemore, in the Highland region, despite opposition from environmentalists. The funicular railway is expected to be able to carry up to 1,200 passengers to near the summit of the 4,084ft high mountain.

UVF 'behind 25lb bomb'

A bomb found outside the offices of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, contained 25lb of a commercial explosive — six times more than originally thought. The type of explosive is often used by the Ulster Volunteer Force, an outlawed loyalist terrorist group. The bomb, which was left at the back of the Sinn Fein offices in Monaghan in the Irish Republic on Monday, failed to explode.

Victory for gardeners

A group of organic gardeners has won a planning battle to remain on land owned by the Duchy of Cornwall in spite of the Duchy's support for a scheme to build houses for young unemployed people on the site. The Duchy had offered to pay for the gardeners to move from the Fairpark Allotments, St Columb Minor, near Newquay, to another site so that 19 homes could be built.

Award for Hurley

Elizabeth Hurley will receive her first serious acting award in the United States later this week. Hurley, 31, also noted as Hugh Grant's girlfriend, will be named Best Supporting Actress for her role in *Dangerous Ground*, yet to open in Britain. The ShoWest award, run by the Association of American Cinema Distributors, has been given for her portrayal of a crack-addicted stripper.

Pirate CDs seized

Britain's biggest haul of pirate compact discs has been recovered by trading standards officials. They found 135,000 CDs worth more than £1.75 million, bound for markets and car boot sales, after raiding a warehouse at an undisclosed location in Oxfordshire. Investigations are continuing and arrests may be made under the Trade Descriptions Act and the Trade Marks Act.

Hunt for 'dead' guitarist

Interpol is expected to investigate a claimed sighting in India of Ritchie Edwards, the guitarist with the Manic Street Preachers rock group who vanished two years ago. His car was found abandoned near the Severn Bridge, leading to speculation that he had killed himself. However police are taking seriously a British lecturer's claim that he saw Edwards on a bus in Goa last November.

Football song and dance

Football is being set to music in an initiative between professional composers, an orchestra, Premiership players and a dancing sheep. The Music and Football project, run by the East of England Orchestra and Derby County Football Club — nicknamed the Rams — will see local schoolchildren helping to compose a piece of musical theatre based on the tactics of a football match.

Labour abandons pledge to restore free eyesight tests

BY JILL SHERMAN AND JEREMY LAURANCE

LABOUR has dropped its commitment to restore free eyesight tests and dental check-ups, it emerged last night.

Party aides said the charges would be reviewed after the general election but denied that Labour had any intention of abolishing them. "We have no plans whatsoever to restore free eyesight tests and dental checks," said a spokesman for Chris Smith, the Shadow Health Secretary.

The party was forced into clarifying its position after Tory accusations that Labour was committed to restoring the free checks, which the Tories claimed would cost £216 million. Although Labour has been silent on the issue over the past few years, Tory researchers picked up a recent reply from John Prescott, the deputy Labour leader, when asked if free tests should be given as a matter of routine.

Mr Prescott had said: "Yes, I think it should be a right. You've got to find the money to finance it. I agree, and we have to deal with that particular argument." William Waldegrave, the Chief Treasury Secretary, yesterday challenged Labour to deny the spending proposal.

In the 1992 election, Labour said it would reinstate the free tests, which the Tories abolished in 1989 amid criticism from the opposition parties. Since then, successive shadow health secretaries have examined a variety of options, considering restoring free tests to some groups.

Last year Harriet Harman seriously considered introducing free eye tests for nine million pensioners. But yester-

day Labour made clear that there would be no such commitment at the general election.

Tony Blair did reaffirm one of the party's spending commitments yesterday, promising that women diagnosed as having breast cancer and needing surgery would have to wait no more than two weeks for an operation. The Labour leader promised to end delays and inefficiency in treatment of the disease, which he said triggered a "private and lonely crisis" for many women.

Government figures show that 10,000 women with breast cancer waited more than two weeks for operations in 1994-95; of those, 2,000 waited more than a month. Labour estimates that ending waiting lists for cancer surgery would cost £100 million it plans to save in a first year of government by cutting NHS red tape.

Mr Blair's promise, made at the party's annual consultation meeting with women's organisations in London, was greeted with scepticism by a cancer specialist, who said it would be difficult to implement and unlikely to improve survival rates.

Richard Sainsbury, cancer surgeon at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary and adviser to the Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund, said the money would be better spent increasing the number of medical oncologists who specialised in drug treatment for cancer.

"If you come to hospital with a palpable cancer you will have had it for at least six months. Two weeks is a drop in the ocean. Most districts still have a single cancer surgeon who has to take holidays sometimes. We would far rather Labour said they would fund improvements to the cancer service recommended by the Chief Medical Officer, Sir Kenneth Calman."

Britain has one of the highest breast-cancer mortality rates in the world, with 13,000 deaths a year, although the incidence of the disease is in line with other countries.

Mr Blair said: "If you thought more British women are diagnosed as having breast cancer, you would be wrong. It is just that more British women are dying from it and I simply do not accept that we can do nothing about it. There is clearly something wrong with the way the system is working."

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Grobelaar and wife, Debbie: "trauma of the trial"



Segers and his wife, Astrid: "He will be cleared"



Fashanu and wife, Melissa. He was a favourite in court

Evans outburst

Continued from page 1

children. I am horrified that David Evans could stoop so low as to abuse my three children with this foul word. How many parents will agree with David Evans that inspecting schools and raising standards is not a proper job?" Janet Anderson, the shadow minister for women, called on Mr Major to dissociate himself from Mr Evans's remarks.

And Elizabeth Peacock, the Tory MP for Basildon and Sewardstone, said: "It is an outrage. He is the last of the male chauvinist pigs. I thought they had died out with the dinosaurs. But Evans is still walking. He should be ashamed of himself. I feel like kicking him."

But Edwina Currie, the Tory MP for Derbyshire South, said: "I refuse to be offended by this because no

women take him seriously. They are extraordinary remarks. I suspect his wife may be waiting for him when he gets home armed with a rolling pin."

John Mansfield, the Tory group leader on Welwyn and Hatfield district council, was shocked by the comments. He said: "I cannot believe he would say such things. I would not dream of uttering such remarks in public even if I thought them. I have to dissociate myself from his remarks. They are an outrage."

Andrew Dodgshon, Ms Johnson's agent, said: "I am appalled. I have known Melanie for four years. She is very proud of her family. But they are not fighting the election. She is David Evans's despicable."

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Surprise engagement shortens odds on William Hague as next Tory leader

Cabinet's last bachelor finds love in the office

By CAROL MIDGLEY

WILLIAM HAGUE, the last bachelor in the Cabinet, was celebrating his engagement yesterday to a Welsh civil servant he calls Jolly Jenkins. The couple said that they fell in love in a Welsh churchyard while she was teaching him the words to the Principality's national anthem.

The Welsh Secretary, who is strongly tipped as a future Tory leader, said that he would marry Ffion Jenkins, 29, next year. His colleagues described their four-month courtship as the best-kept secret in Whitehall.

"He is absolutely head over heels with this woman," said one MP. "It has been difficult for him to keep it quiet."

Until recently, Miss Jenkins, an Oxford graduate and alto singer who plays the harp and clarinet, was the No 2 private secretary at the Welsh Office where she and Mr Hague, 35, worked closely together.

Political friends said that marriage would greatly enhance Mr Hague's chance of leadership. "With an elegant wife and perhaps a couple of kids to follow, he will just about make up the perfect leadership CV. The profile is complete," said one. According to the bookmaker William

Hill, Mr Hague's odds of becoming the next leader shortened from 6-1 to 5-1 yesterday.

Yesterday the couple were contemplating more immediate matters. An engagement ring has not yet been chosen but rumour has it that they will buy from Clive Ranger, a Cardiff jewellery shop that specialises in Welsh gold. "We have not been able to shop together without revealing the secret, so a little expedition will be taking place," said Mr Hague.

The couple met in 1995, when Mr Hague replaced John Redwood as Welsh Secretary and Miss Jenkins was working in the Secretary of State's private office. They have become close only in the past few months. Miss Jenkins began sabbatical leave last week and will return to a senior civil service post in June, although it is not expected to be in the Welsh Office.

Her father is Emrys Jenkins, chief executive of the Arts Council of Wales. Her mother Myra is a Welsh tutor and magistrate and her sister Manon works in the private office of the Prince of Wales at St James's Palace. Her brief was to improve the Prince's standing in Wales.

Mr Jenkins is considered a leading light in the *crackach*, the Welsh Establishment. He worked his way up from being a BBC Wales announcer to become director of the Royal National Eisteddfod, but left in 1993 to take up his post on the arts council.

Miss Jenkins was educated in Cardiff and went on to read English at Jesus College, Oxford, followed by a degree in Welsh at the University of Wales. At Oxford she is remembered as one of the main organisers of the Welsh Society. On one occasion she was rushed to hospital after apparently being cut on the leg by a ceremonial sword at a party.

Julie Kirkbride, the Tory candidate for Bromsgrove, and a close friend of Mr



Miss Jenkins and Mr Hague in London yesterday. Colleagues described their four-month courtship as the best-kept secret in Whitehall

leagues were surprised by the news yesterday, although Welsh Office aides had suspected romance when, at a recent St David's Day party, Mr Hague had said that he was leaving early to have a ceremonial sword at a party.

Many friends and col-

Hague, said that she had had no inkling of the relationship. "I had absolutely no idea, but I am thrilled for them."

"Ffion told me the other day that she was on shopping leave for a bit. Now I know what she was shopping for. She is very bright and very sharp. It will be a real meeting of minds."

Toby Horton, chairman of Richmond Conservative Association in Mr Hague's Yorkshire constituency, said: "This is marvellous news. We haven't met Ffion yet, but William is planning to bring her up to the constituency and we are all looking forward to meeting her."

Mr Horton revealed that the

MP had taken him into his confidence before popping the question ten days ago. "The relationship had been going on for a while. William had to be very discreet but now Ffion has taken a sabbatical and the news can come out. I think that is the right way of doing things."

Asked whether a wife would

be seen as an asset to Mr Hague's political profile, Mr Horton said: "I am sure she will be an asset whatever William does in the future."

From his office at the Arts Council of Wales, in Cardiff, Mr Jenkins said of his daughter: "This is her big day. We are delighted for her — very happy indeed."

Boy hit as he plays chicken on motorway

A BOY aged 12 was last night critically ill in intensive care after he was hit by a car on the M53 near Ellesmere Port, in Cheshire, as he played "motorway chicken". Matthew Wellsbury was watched by a group of children, including his sister, as the car swerved but failed to avoid him as he ran from the central reservation across the northbound carriageway near junction nine.

His mother, Julie Wellsbury, 39, said: "Matthew is being taken for a scan and we are keeping our fingers crossed that he will be all right." She was at her son's bedside at Walton Hospital, Liverpool, with her former husband, Tommy.

Wendy Bridge, 31, a friend of the family, said the boy and his brother Michael, 15, decided to climb the embankment to the motorway. Her son Tony, 13, tried to stop them but then heard the accident.

The RAC called for the security of the M53 near Ellesmere town centre to be reassessed. A girl was badly injured at the same place a year ago.

It said motorway chicken was especially popular where motorway networks were close to residential areas, as in Solihull and Birmingham. One of the worst blackspots has been on the M6 between junctions nine and ten, near Walsall. In London teenagers, sometimes intoxicated, taunt motorists on inner-city streets.

Last September an 11-year-old was killed when he played chicken with a police car on the M8, near Glasgow. An 11-year-old girl lost a leg close to Hamilton, near Glasgow, also last year.

A Cheshire Police spokesman said road safety officers had been visiting schools warning children of the dangers. "We are saying we realise they have high spirits, that they can be mischievous but this is not the way to vent a sense of adventure," she said.



Kirkbride: a close friend, she had had no idea

Breeder who let horses starve is jailed for cruelty

By DAREH GREGORIAN

A LEADING horse breeder was jailed and banned from keeping animals for life yesterday after leaving her own horses to starve in squalor.

The horses of Leigh-Ann Jeffries, 39, fifteen-year-old Frisbee, and four-year-old Heddle, had been weeks away from death when RSPCA inspectors found the emaciated mares in a dingy stable on a farm at Lansdown, near Bath, with no food and a bucket of "black, swamp-like" water.

Frisbee's bones were "hideously prominent", Julie Glynn, prosecuting for the RSPCA, told Bath magistrates. One vet said it was the worst case of emaciation he had seen in 34 years.

Sentencing Jeffries to three months' jail, Francis Hillier, chairman of the magistrates, told her: "The only suitable sentence is to send you to prison because of the extreme suffering to these horses over a period of time. You will be disqualified from caring for

Detectives reopen file on death of star's son

FROM QUENTIN LETTS
IN NEW YORK

POLICE in Minnesota are reopening inquiries into the death of the deformed infant son of the pop star Prince. The child died a week after his birth last October and the cause of death was given then as complications from "clover leaf syndrome", which deforms the skull.

The 38-year-old singer and his wife, Mayte, were said to be devastated by the loss of their first child. Officials in Hennepin County, Minnesota, said yesterday that they were reopening the case after homicide detectives interviewed two women, twin sisters Erlene and Arlene Mojica, who used to work for Prince. They were fired by the singer on December 23. Larry Altman, a lawyer for the women, declined to say what they had told the police, but the local medical examiner confirmed that the case would be reconsidered.

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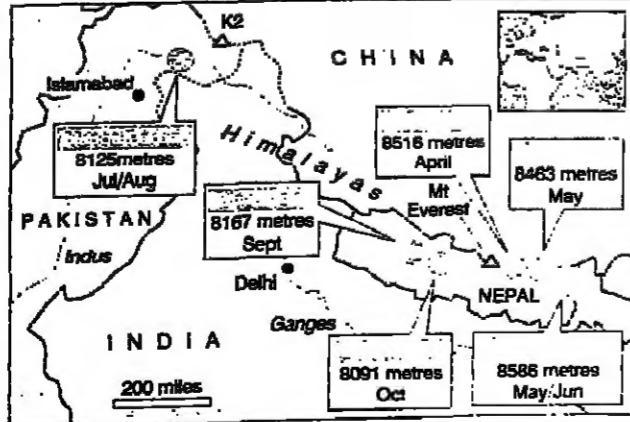
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Alan Hinkes must scale the six mountains before winter starts in November



'Mad mountaineer' sets sights on six-peak climb into record books

By GLEN OWEN

A BRITISH climber dubbed the "mad mountaineer" has become the first man to scale six of the world's highest peaks in one year.

Alan Hinkes, 42, who will climb without oxygen, specialises in tackling mountains that rise beyond 8,000 metres and take climbers into the "death zone" where oxygen is one-third of that at sea-level and humans can survive for only a few days.

There are 14 such peaks, all in the Himalayas, and over

the past ten years Mr Hinkes has climbed eight. His attempt to bag the remainder in a year would beat the previous record of four 8,000ers" and Mr Hinkes would be one of only five people to have climbed them all. He plans to spend his birthday on top of Lhotse.

Announcing his plans yesterday at the Alpine Club in London, he said the £70,000 expedition would begin in late April at the base camp for Lhotse. He will then tackle Makalu, Kangchenjunga, Nanga Parbat, Dhaul-

lagiri and Annapurna I. He has to finish before winter starts in November.

Mr Hinkes was born in Yorkshire. He has been climbing since 1972. As a cameraman he has worked on high-altitude documentaries. He said he had been preparing for ten years. "Some may see me as an eccentric madman but I just want to climb mountains," he said.

Mr Hinkes may fly back halfway through to spend a week with his 13-year-old daughter Fiona, who lives with a former girlfriend.

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'It is difficult to live a normal life. The only people I can be myself with are other bereaved parents'



Remembering their children who died almost a year ago: Duncan and Liz McLennan with Abigail; David and Karen Scott with Hannah; Barbara and Martyn Dunn with Charlotte; and Ellen and Sandy Petrie with John

Dunblane families face anniversary united in grief

By ALEXANDRA FREAN
MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

ONE year after the Dunblane shootings, in which 16 primary school children and their teacher were killed, the victims' parents say they have learnt to cope with their grief through meeting every week to laugh and cry together.

The meetings, held every Thursday evening in the town's Ecumenical Hall, were suggested to the families by social workers, and have become an emotional anchor in their lives. Les Morton, who lost

his daughter Emily in the massacre on March 13, said: "A lot of people talk about Thursday evenings, that the meetings are the highlight of their week, and I can understand that because it is actually very difficult to live what people might think is a normal life. In a funny way, the only people that I can be myself with are the other bereaved parents, because they are the only people who really know how I feel and I know how they feel."

The parents were speaking exclusively on an ITV documentary, *Dunblane: Remembering Our*

Children, which will be screened at 9pm next Wednesday. The film includes home video clips and photographs of the dead children.

Ellen Petrie, who lost her son John, said: "I look forward to a Thursday night to go and sit and have a blather with the rest of the girls; where we can sit and have a drink, have a laugh and we're not crying all the time. And then the Friday morning I feel fine."

Her husband, Sandy, said: "You can feel your week falling away, all week, and then it comes to the Thursday night and once you've

been there, where the other people know exactly how you feel — and you get that lift."

Liz McLennan, mother of Abigail, said that the members of the families took it in turns to deal with media inquiries, depending on how strong they felt. "There is always somebody ready there to pick up: like in a battlefield, when the guy who holds the banner falls there is always somebody behind to pick up that banner and go forward."

Martyn Dunn, who lost his daughter Charlotte, said that the other parents had become like an

extended family. He and his wife, Barbara, moved to England after the shootings because of his job, but they visit Charlotte's grave in Dunblane regularly. "Even though we are 300 miles away, we know that the extended family are looking after our interests," he said.

Mr Dunn said that all the families had co-operated with the programme-makers. Only eight of the families agreed to be interviewed because the others had not felt strong enough.

David Scott, father of Hannah, said: "We decided to make this film

to show how, in these tragic circumstances, we can be positive, how difficult it is day to day, how all of our priorities have changed and how the children and Gwen [their teacher] live on."

The parents said they had only recently started talking about the shooting itself. Most of their energy has been spent getting through one day at a time, and supporting surviving children. Mrs Petrie said she took comfort every day from going into her son's room. "In the morning I open his blind and we've got a woollen doll and I'll say,

'Morning wee man', and I know he's not going to answer me but this helps me through the day."

The parents plan to commemorate the anniversary by lighting candles in their windows. They appealed to the media to leave them alone on the day. They said: "As March 13 approaches, we have requested that Dunblane is free from media attention. We trust that you will respect our privacy and we invite everyone to share in remembering our children and their teacher by lighting a candle at seven o'clock on that evening."

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Palumbo rails against trashy train liveries

By JONATHAN PRYNN, TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

PRIVATE rail companies defended the colours sported by their trains yesterday after Lord Palumbo, the former Arts Council chairman, attacked the new liveries as "kitsch". Speaking in a Lords debate on design, Lord Palumbo said he despised the colour schemes emerging. "Why should the liveries of privatised rail services be such a rash of kitsch?" he asked.

Six private companies have unveiled the colours for their trains. They range from the menacing dark blue of the Great North Eastern Railway, which has earned its trains the nickname "Stealth Bombers", to the orange and green of Midland Main Line Virgin, which will operate about half of all InterCity services, plans to paint its trains in its distinctive scarlet, while Great Western Trains has opted for a more sober ivory and green.

Alex Rattray, the account director at Saatchi & Saatchi Design responsible for the Midland Main Line livery, said: "We wanted to signal a change and get away from the idea of the golden age of rail and be more modern. The orange stripes are like 'go-faster' stripes to suggest that sense of speed and zooming along. I think the word 'kitsch' is unkind: one man's kitsch is

another man's good taste." Rail commentators expressed mixed feelings about the colours, the latest in a long history of livery changes since the nationalisation of the railways in 1948. Roger Ford, Editor of *Rail Privatisation News*, said: "I agree that the Midland Main Line colours are very distinctive but I think most passengers care far more about the service inside the trains rather than the colour of the outside. The new liveries are designed to be seen from the trackside and who stands there apart from train spotters and photographers?"

Older rail buffs still hanker after the distinctive colours of the "Big Four" private companies that were amalgamated to form British Railways — the chocolate and cream of Great Western Railway, malachite green of Southern Railway, teak brown of London & North Eastern and maroon of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway.

Two other operators announced their liveries. South West Trains is to use the Stagecoach bus company corporate colours of red, blue and orange, and Connex South Eastern will be white and blue with yellow stripes.

New trains, page 26

Sheepdip poison plea farmer is sent to jail

By MICHAEL HORNSBY

A FARMER was yesterday found guilty of attempted murder despite his plea that sheepdip poisons had made him incapable of controlling his actions.

Robert Billings, 60, was sentenced to nine years in prison for shooting George Foster in November 1993. Billings, from Warninglid in West Sussex, was given 12 years in jail for the crime in 1994. But the court of appeal quashed the conviction last July after hearing that new evidence about poisoning by the organophosphates in sheep dip had not been available at the original hearing.

The defence at the new trial at Lewes Crown Court said that the chemicals, either by themselves or in combination with severe alcoholic intoxication, had rendered Billings unable to form a specific intent to kill. It was the first time that the effect of exposure to the insecticide used by tens of thousands of sheep farmers had been offered as a defence in a criminal trial. Hundreds of farmers claim to have suffered varying degrees of ill health after dipping sheep from 1975 to 1992.

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Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary, was educated at Harrow County Boys' School and Cambridge, not Harrow, as reported on March 2.

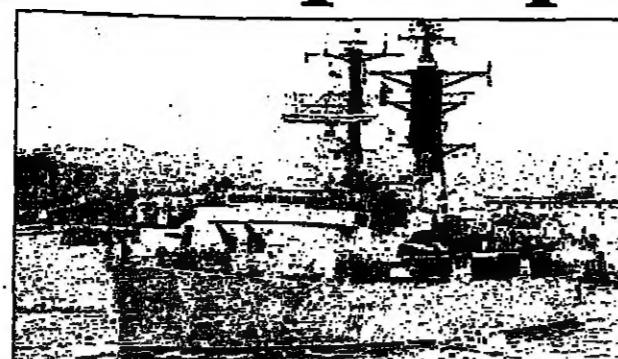
Cleaning ladies go on board to keep destroyer shipshape

BY SHIRLEY ENGLISH

SIX Scottish cleaning ladies have made naval history by joining the all-male crew of a Royal Navy warship during trials at sea, it emerged yesterday.

HMS Newcastle set sail with the civilian Mrs Mopps on board because of a shortage of able seamen. The women, aged between 18 and 43, were drafted in to carry out general duties in the galley and dining hall areas between November 9 and February 3 this year. They had to sign the Official Secrets Act before boarding the Type 42 air defence destroyer and embarking on the three-month trials in British waters alongside 220 navy personnel and soldiers from 3 Para, the affiliated regiment.

None of the six employees from the Aadvark Cleaning Company, in Dunfermline, Fife, had been to sea before and had to take regular doses of anti-sea sickness tablets.



HMS Newcastle, which was cleaned by, from left, Joyce Wallace, Jackie Healy, Liz Henry, Avis Innes, Mitch Bacon and Eve Peden, who joined the all-male crew after signing the Official Secrets Act

Yesterdays Royal Navy said that the presence of the civilian cleaners on the 4,500-tonne warship freed the available HM Forces to "concentrate on other duties".

The women were trained in sea survival and firefighting before the destroyer set sail. They had separate accommodation and their own mess and showers. Unconfirmed reports say that they received a £20-a-week bonus.

Liz Henry, 44, the cleaners

supervisor, said: "None of us had ever been to sea before on a warship so when they put the idea to us we thought we would give it a bash. It's an experience I would not have missed for the world. It was really quite exciting."

Three of the cleaners were married with children and one was replaced early on because of sea sickness. The longest spell spent at sea was two weeks.

Jackie Healy, 18, from Dun-

fermline, was the last to join the team, as the replacement, and enjoyed herself so much she now wants to join the Royal Navy. "I really enjoyed being on board HMS Newcastle. It was a laugh," she said.

Rodney Currie, manager of Aadvark Cleaning Company, in Dunfermline, said it was a marvellous opportunity for the women. He said that the firm had already had a contract to clean ships during

refits at Rosyth and was asked if staff would be interested in taking part in the sea trials. There was a flood of volunteers.

Mr Currie said: "The women were terribly excited when they went, and when they came back for Christmas they were full of stories. We do a lot of navy work and it's great when our staff get a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity such as this to go to sea. They built up a very good relation-

ship with the ship's company. I think everyone got on well."

He said that on land their job had been to jet-spray clean the ship's superstructure, including the muzzles, gun turrets and lifeboats. But at sea they concentrated on duties in the dining room and kitchen. The company is part of Aadvark Cleaning Company in Portsmouth, which has had contracts with the Ministry of Defence for eight years.

The women joined the vessel

at Rosyth and sailed to Portsmouth where most of the trials took place. A Ministry of Defence spokesman said the women did a valuable job during their time on board. But he said there was nothing unusual in using civilian staff, although that was the first time civilian cleaners had set sail.

He said: "It is standard procedure after a ship's refit to take on board civilian personnel but usually it is specialists on land."

such as engineers. In this case the ship took six contract cleaners to make sure that the Royal Navy personnel were able to concentrate fully on other duties."

The Royal Navy emphasised that the ship was undergoing only trials during the time the cleaners were on board. HMS Newcastle is now fully operational and the six temporary seafarers have returned to their normal duties on land.



More defence cuts a risk to national security, MPs say

BY MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

FURTHER cuts in defence spending will "jeopardise the defence of the realm", an all-party Commons committee said yesterday.

MPs on the Commons Defence Committee said there was a well made case for reversing some of the cuts imposed under the Government's Options for Change review in 1990 and Frontline First in 1994. Understaffed units, particularly in the infantry, were suffering.

The committee reported that the Ministry of Defence was going to save £85 million in salaries in the current financial year because of the staff shortages, most of it from the Army. The projected savings in future years would rise to £120 million, the MPs said. The defence budget, however, was not being reduced because the savings were being spent elsewhere in it.

Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary, told the MPs that he was not happy about the situation and would prefer to have the forces fully manned. But the committee said that the shortages in the Army looked set to last for at least another three years. The present undermanning was 5,350, which was forecast to fall to 4,700 by April, to 4,000

in April 1998 and to about 3,000 in 1999.

The shortages had created a vicious circle, the committee said. Soldiers had to work longer hours and spend more time away from home, which resulted in more leaving the Army.

The MPs said: "We insist that the defence spending plans set out in the 1996 Budget must at least be maintained in real terms in future years."

The committee said that major equipment programmes would be vulnerable to delay or cancellation because a large number of them were due early next century. In the financial year 2003-2004, the programmes for an Horizon-class frigate, the Eurofighter combat aircraft, an upgraded Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft and a new RAF anti-armour weapon would be in their peak years of expenditure.

The committee also disclosed that there were 116 outstanding equipment requirements, many of which were very expensive and were also due in service at the same time. They included the Astor airborne surveillance system and Batch 2 Trafalgar class hunter-killer submarines.

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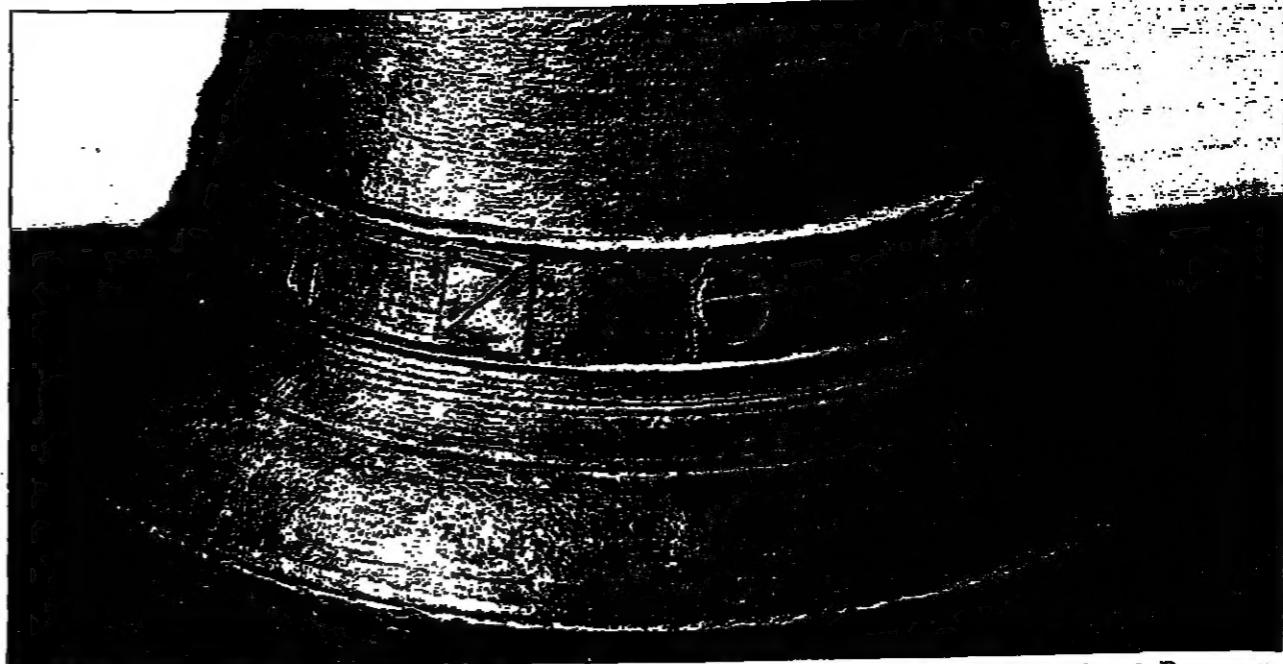
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Ship discovered off American coast rings a bell

SCOTT SHARPE / REUTER



A bell, cast in 1709, from a wreck off North Carolina believed to be Blackbeard's ship, *Queen Anne's Revenge*

Sea wreck renews hunt for Blackbeard's skull

By DAMIAN WHITWORTH

THE almost certain discovery of Blackbeard's ship has raised hopes that the publicity will solve the riddle of what happened to the notorious pirate's skull. After a Highlander serving with the Royal Navy sliced Blackbeard's head off with a broadsword, his skull was said to have been lined with silver and used as a drinking vessel in the taverns of the North Carolina coast.

The wreck discovered by American archaeologists 200 yards off North Carolina — the exact site is being kept a secret to deter modern pirates — is believed to be the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, the biggest pirate ship of the time with more than 40 guns. It was hailed yesterday as the most important relic of the golden age of piracy.

David Cordingly, a world expert on pirates and author of *Life Among The Pirates*, said the only other pirate wreck of note was the *Whidah*, which belonged to the rather less celebrated Black Sam Bellamy. The prospect of raising the *Revenge* was "very exciting. This would be the greatest find, very little has been left behind by pirates and Blackbeard was the most famous of all."

Edward Teach, an Englishman who became known and feared as Blackbeard, created mayhem throughout the Caribbean and along the eastern coast of America up to Virginia in the early 18th century. He pioneered psychological warfare by spreading stories about himself. "He doesn't seem to have been terribly cruel; he doesn't seem to have

gone in for torture," Dr Cordingly said. "But he was outrageous. His big thing was to go in and blockade a whole town. Often he was really only after a medicine chest, because all his crew had syphilis. Blackbeard was the most colourful and famous pirate because his death was so dramatic."

Contemporary accounts of his grisly demise in 1718 are found in salt-stained logbooks kept by the captains of the Royal Navy ships that ensnared him, from a report in the *Boston News Letter* and in Captain Charles Johnson's *The General History of Robberies and Murders of the Most Notorious Pirates*.

The Governor of Virginia,



Blackbeard, right, fighting First Lieutenant Maynard. Shortly after, he lost his head

exasperated by the failure of his counterpart in North Carolina to "extirpate this nest of vipers", had asked the Royal Navy to go after Teach. They brought their vessels alongside his in the early morning and woke Teach from a drunken stupor.

Blackbeard and Robert Maynard, a first lieutenant, fought with swords and took shots at each other. Teach was wounded but fought on. The *News Letter* reported: "One of Maynard's men, being a Highlander, engaged Teach with his broadsword, who gave Teach such a cut on the neck, Teach saying Well done lad; the Highlander replied, If it be not well done, I'll do it better. With that he gave him a

second stroke, which cut off his head, laying it flat on his shoulder."

Local legend says that when the headless corpse was thrown overboard it swam several times round the boat.

The head was said to have been bought from Maynard by a citizen of Bath, North Carolina, boiled, and the skull lined with silver. It was reported to have been used in taverns along the East Coast as a drinking vessel. Now its location is unknown. If all this fuss about the wreck could unearth the skull again, it would be wonderful," Dr Cordingly said.

Blackbeard is the inspiration behind a cottage industry in the parts of America that he terrorised. There is a Blackbeard museum on Roanoke Island, North Carolina, and a Blackbeard Internet site is run from Manteo in the same state. It lists the seafarer's romantic adventures: he had 12 wives, one of whom was a 16-year-old from Bath.

Residents of the islands where the wreck was found are delighted and remain fiercely loyal to Blackbeard. Jim Beach, manager of the Queen Anne's Revenge seafood restaurant on Roanoke Island, said yesterday: "Blackbeard was a fascinating guy and we are proud of him. He was certainly a despicable fellow, but we hold him in high regard."

Nelson's hair saved grandson

NELSON'S blood may have been in his veins, but the grandson of Britain's greatest naval hero was not of a military disposition.

In fact, according to a letter to be sold at auction, Horace Nelson Ward's mother went to considerable lengths to ensure that he avoided having to follow in his grandfather's footsteps after being called up in 1848.

Horatio Nelson Ward,

the illegitimate daughter of

Nelson's liaison with

Emma, Lady Hamilton, ap-

parently even went so far as

to "bribe" Sir William Bur-

nnett, an Admiralty official,

by sending him a lock of her

father's hair. In an accom-

panying letter she says:

"Permit me again to thank

you for your kindness to my son. Now the lock of dark brown hair and the letter are to be sold at

Bonhams in London. They

are expected to fetch up to

£3,000 on March 13. Alexander Crum Ewing, of Bonhams, said: "The evi-

dence suggests that her gru-

litude could have been for ex-
cusing her son from his naval com-
mitments. The gift might have acted as a guarantee, allowing Horace to become a

Highlander, engaged Teach with his broadsword, who gave Teach such a cut on the neck, Teach saying Well done lad; the Highlander replied, If it be not well done, I'll do it better. With that he gave him a

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Gala queen misses out in unequal contest

By GILLIAN BOWDITCIL, SCOTLAND CORRESPONDENT

GALA queen contests, long a fixture at fêtes across Scotland, are under threat after a local authority ruled that they do not conform to equal opportunities guidelines.

Fife council has banned the Miss Craigton competition at Craigton Country Fair, the largest fair in Fife, which is run by the council each May near St Andrews.

The girl chosen presents prizes at the fair and represents the area. But the council's East Area Community Services Committee has decided that the reigning Miss Craigton, Alison Hughes, 17, will be the last.

Susan Clark, a committee member, said: "We feel that the contest did not reflect the true spirit of equal opportunities and placed too much

emphasis on how a person looks. We suggested to the advisory group that the fair might want to investigate an appropriate alternative event."

David Sommerville, head of Fife council's community services department, said other such competitions would be looked at in exactly the same way. However, gala queen contests held by voluntary groups would not be affected. Edinburgh council has also banned gala queen contests, saying they are numbed.

The decision has angered some councillors. James Braid, who chaired the judging committee for Miss Craigton, said the contest was not about beauty. "There is no shortage of people who wanted to take part."

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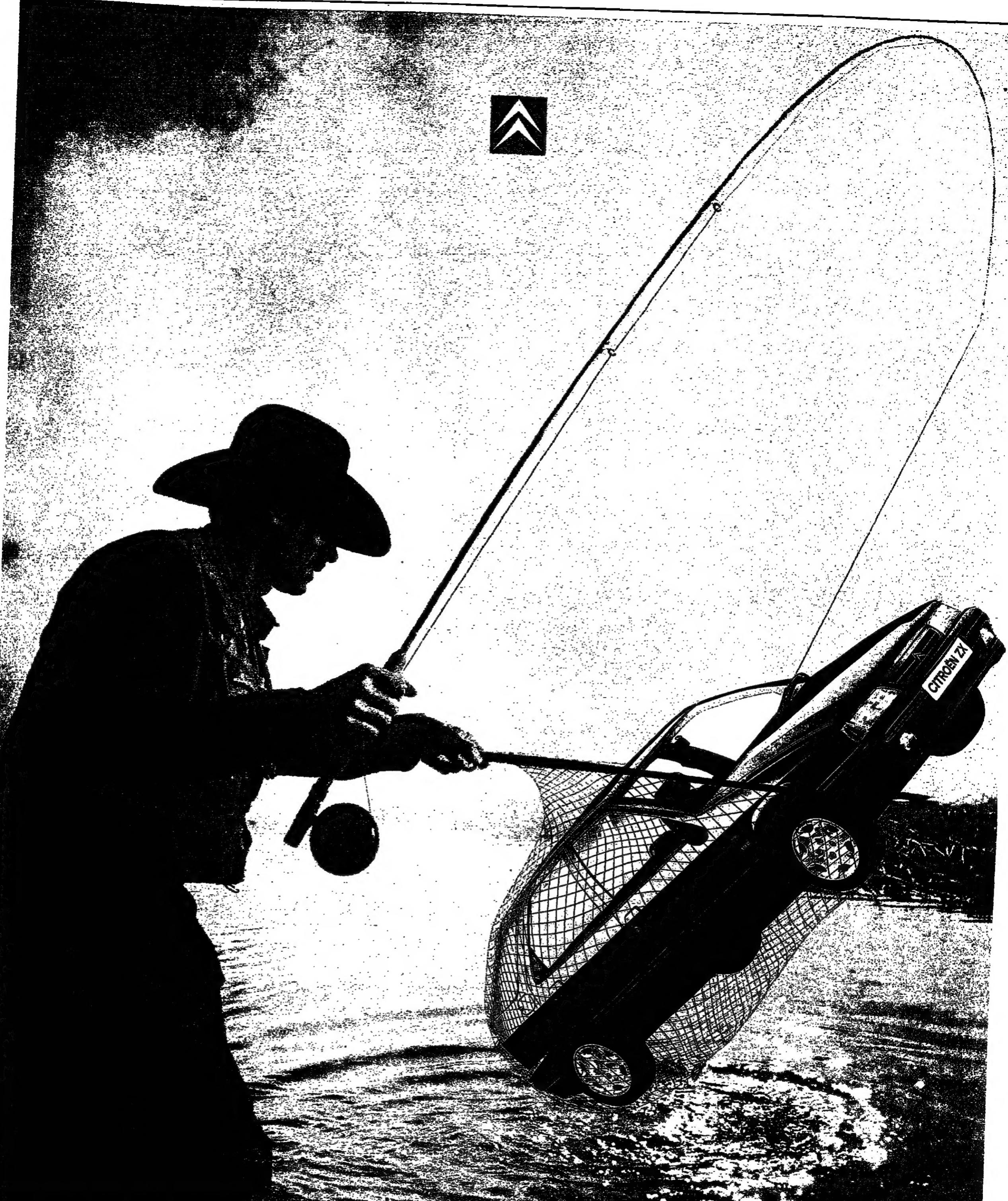
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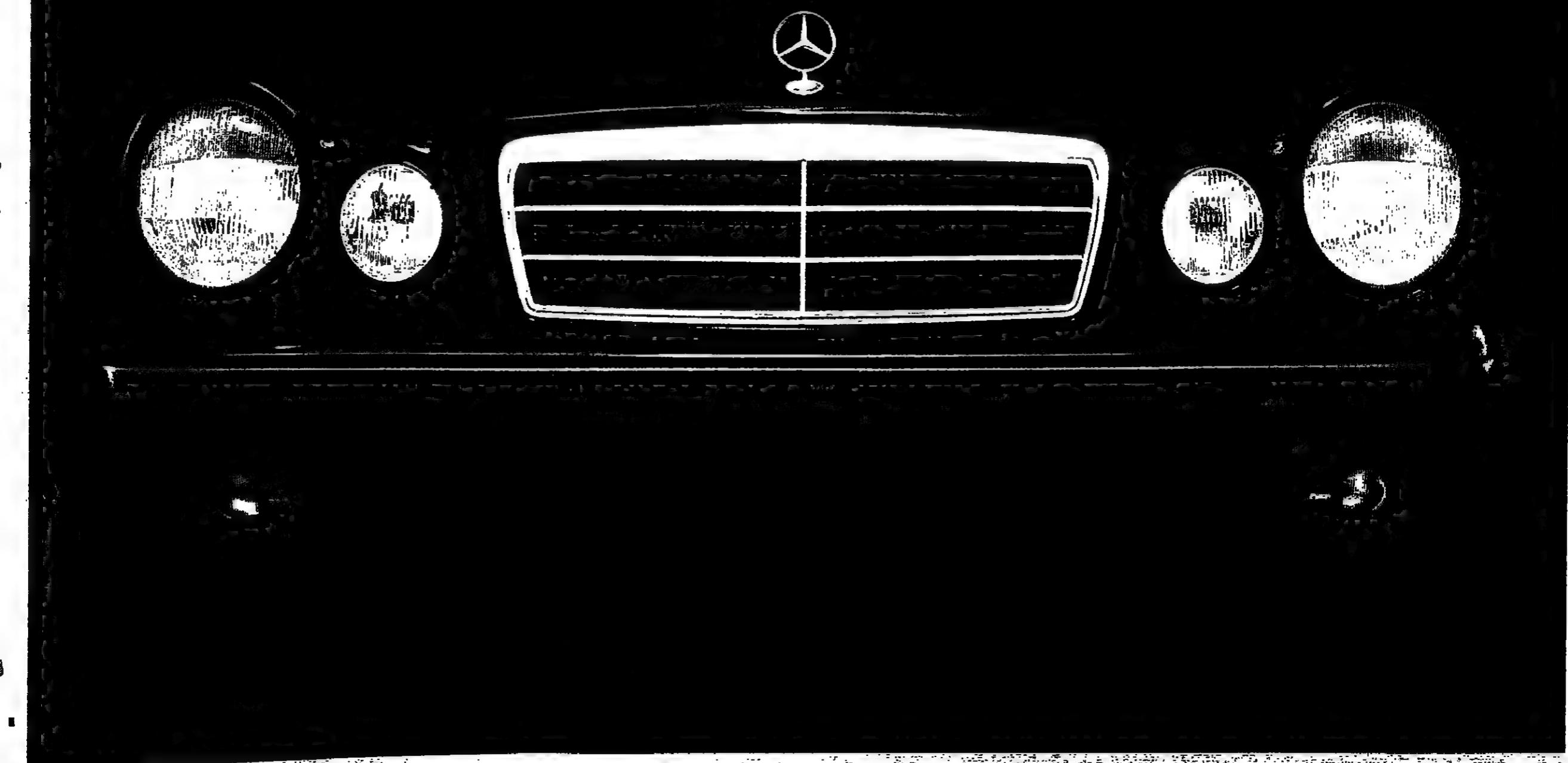
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Battle for final 12 miles to radioactive waste dump intensifies as German activists tunnel under road

Anti-nuclear protesters defy police onslaught

FROM ROGER BOYES IN GORLEBEN

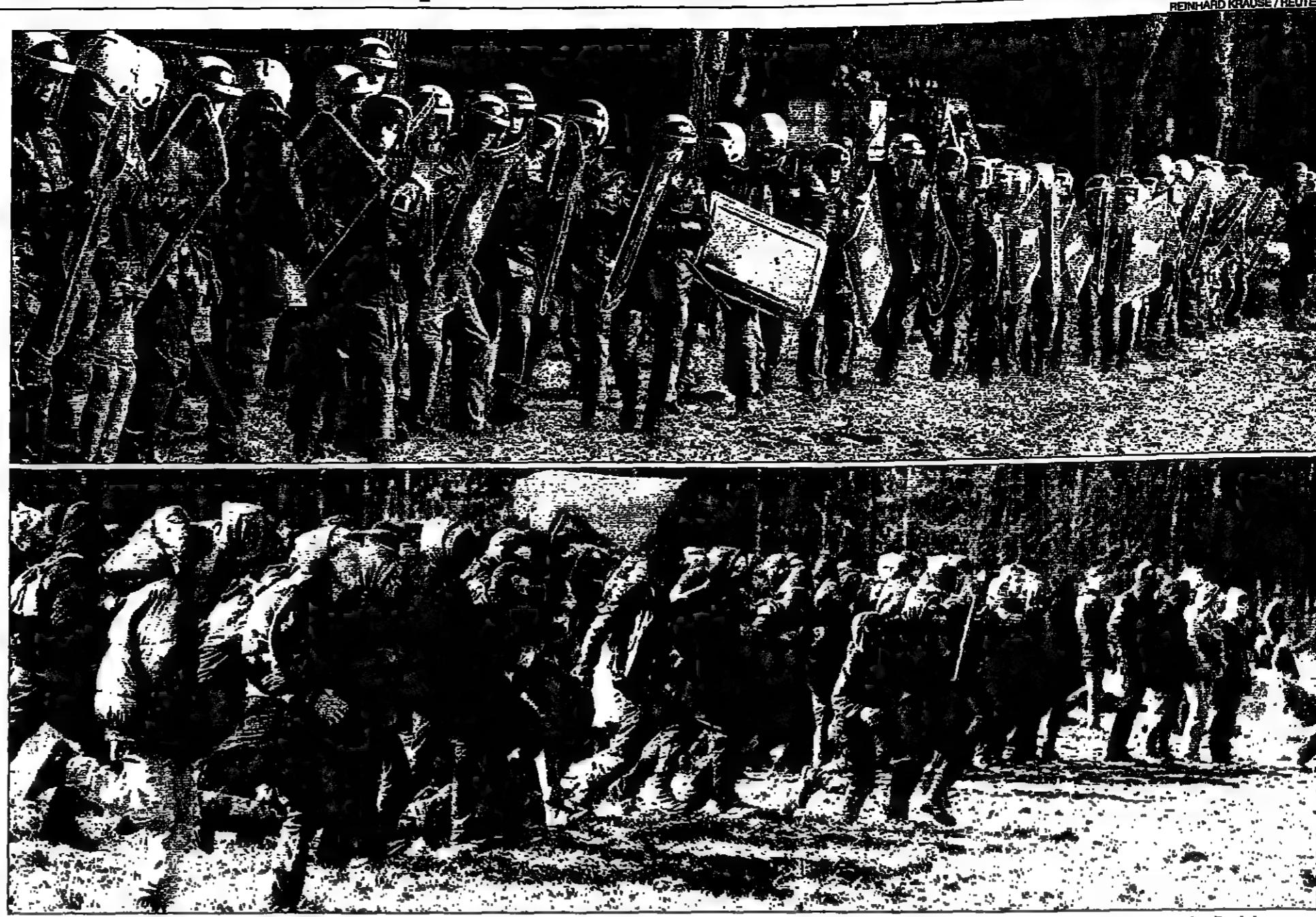
THE German police yesterday launched baton charges and fired powerful water canon against masked stone-throwing anti-nuclear protesters in a pitched battle to gain control of a country road leading to a radioactive waste dump.

Petrol bombs flew through the air, bursting at the feet of several hundred riot police as the German authorities tried to find a way of transporting some 700 tonnes of nuclear waste to a huge fortified warehouse in Gorleben.

The six nuclear canisters were carried the length of Germany, from Bavaria in the south to the far northeast of the country, in a railway odyssey. Saboteurs sawed through tracks or made hoax bomb alarms and, on the final stretch, two protesters covered themselves with quick-setting cement in an attempt to delay the cargo. "Delay is a kind of victory for us... it gives the Government time to change its mind," said Peter Lustig of the Gusborn protest camp, one of 14 improvised settlements that have sprung up during this frenzied week of demonstration and rioting.

A few dozen yards away from Herr Lustig's camp was a further sign of the delaying strategy: an approach road to Gorleben which had been undermined in four places by tunnellers. Earth has been scooped out by the barrowload

If all roads were made impassable and the waste had to be returned, the authorities would have to rethink their strategy. That prospect, however remote, has given an edge to the protests. Germany has strict laws on the suitability of roads for heavy-duty traffic and it would not take much to



German riot police, top, and anti-nuclear protesters, above, line up for confrontation as authorities sought to move a nuclear waste shipment to the dump in Gorleben

make them unsafe. Some of the 1,200 inhabitants of the Gusborn protest camp were preparing yesterday for the Quickborn campaign. Others gathered around a loudspeaker in the centre of the camp — which, with its wig-

wams, resembles an Indian reservation — to hear intercepted police messages. "We have taken two prisoners..." crackled one message. "Wait for further instructions." came the standard reply.

The protesters — tired and

unwashed after two cold, damp nights in an open field — cackled with mirth until a camp orderly told them to switch off the transmission since it is an illegal act to tune into the German police frequency.

The protesters — tired and

nuclear activists — talk around their campfires about Gandhi and Mao, they confirm to German nerve. Farmers, elderly villagers, shopkeepers and teachers all support the militants and close their eyes to the violence because something fundamentally German

— the sanctity of nature — appears to be under threat. Indeed, for generations of Germans brought up on Novalis and other Romantic poets, the defence of nature is a basic right that justifies civil disobedience.

Turkish leader defies military ultimatum to halt Islamic drift

FROM ANDREW FINKEL
IN ISTANBUL



Erbakan: will not leave office without a fight

TURKEY's pro-Islamic Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan, yesterday defied threats by his military to force him to halt what they see as the country's drift towards radical Islam.

He told supporters that he would not resign but would soldier on as the defender of democracy and the sovereignty of parliament. "That is it. No more discussion," he told his Welfare Party MPs ahead of a planned opposition motion of no confidence, which was rejected by parliament.

The supporters made it clear that they had no intention of implementing a strict package of measures proposed by the military.

However, the Turkish armed forces are unlikely to retreat from their ultimatum, issued after a nine-hour meeting of the country's National Security Council last Friday. Commentators have described the meeting as being nothing

military seems to be proposing are themselves anachronistic and incompatible with Turkey's European ambitions. They include reinstatement in some form of Article 163 of the penal code used to combat religious propaganda against the state.

The military also wants stricter enforcement of Article 174 of the Constitution, which safeguards some of the initial radical reforms of the Turkish republic. Among them are the now neglected prohibitions against Islamic dress and religious brotherhoods.

The forces are clearly alarmed at the spread of widespread frustration in Turkey, through private Koranic schools and secret organisations.

The generals are believed to have presented Mr Erbakan with intelligence reports suggesting that Islamic militancy has overtaken Kurdish separatism as the country's number one threat.

The military's list of about 20 demands, however, appears designed to make it impossible for Mr Erbakan, whose Welfare Party campaigned for fuller Islamic rights, to continue in office. He has made it clear that he will not go without a fight.

His one comfort is that he knows the military will hesitate to antagonise domestic and international opinion with a full seizure of power. An attempt to prune the Welfare Party by force risks making it grow stronger.

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EMU delay 'requires new treaty'

BONN: Helmut Hesse, a member of the Bundesbank council, was quoted yesterday as saying that a delay in launching the European single currency would force the renegotiation of the Maastricht treaty, and its ratification by EU member states.

Mr Hesse, in an interview with the *Nordsee-Zeitung* of Bremerhaven, also said the efforts of some countries to join economic and monetary union did not mean that the Maastricht criteria could be ignored.

"At the moment, all member states are wildly determined to fulfil the criteria and be there at the start. It would be a loss of prestige to miss the start," he said.

But, he added: "We must insist the criteria are strictly observed because the entry of Germany is only allowable under the constitution if the currency union is stable."

Record postwar unemployment has pressured state finances and put reaching the criteria into doubt. (Reuter)

Nato chief says Moscow ready for security deal

BY MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

NATO and Russia are about to begin work on the text of an agreement that will lead to a new strategic security partnership. Javier Solana, the alliance's Secretary-General, disclosed yesterday.

He said he believed that the Russians would agree to the partnership and that it was hoped to complete a deal before the Nato summit in Madrid on July 8. Señor Solana, who was speaking during a visit to London, is flying to Moscow this weekend for negotiations with Yevgeni Primakov, the Russian Foreign Minister.

The increasing confidence within the alliance that Moscow will reach an agreement was reflected in a meeting yesterday at Downing Street between the Nato Secretary-General and John Major.

Downing Street sources said the Prime Minister and Señor Solana agreed that there were positive signs that Nato and Russia could agree on a new security relationship. Although Moscow continues to oppose Nato's plan to offer membership of the alliance to several former Warsaw Pact nations at the Madrid summit, the detailed negotiations between Señor Solana and the Russians over the past few months had proved constructive, the Nato chief said.

Addressing the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Señor Solana said: "We are about to begin work on the text of an agreement. The atmosphere is constructive. I do not want to minimise the difficulties, but I believe they are interested in a partnership with Nato and that we will conclude one." He said there was "movement and momentum" in the discussions.

"What we are willing to conclude with Russia is of far-reaching importance for the whole of Europe."

There was no question, he added, of "buying Russia off" or compensating it for the alliance's proposal to extend further east. "Like the enlargement process itself, the development of our relationship with Russia is part of a wider transformation of Nato that will be good for Russia, good for Nato and good for the whole of Europe," he said.

Señor Solana said that critics of enlargement appeared to forget that it was part of a broader strategy to create a more stable and secure Europe.

"I see a great tendency to highlight the difficulties and speculate about the consequences of enlarging Nato, but far less attention to the far greater implications of not doing so." To maintain Nato as a "closed shop" would be to keep the countries of Central and Eastern Europe "imprisoned in their past".

Dismissing claims that enlargement would be hugely expensive, he said that opening Nato to new members would be a "good bargain and a sound investment".

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Paralysed Frenchman tells his story in the wink of an eye

FROM SUSAN BELL
IN PARIS

A PARALYSED former magazine editor has written an acclaimed book using the only part of his body that still moves — his left eyelid.

Jean-Dominique Bauby, 44, was the editor-in-chief of *Elle* until he suffered a brain haemorrhage on December 8, 1995, which plunged him into a coma. When he awoke he

was permanently paralysed from head to toe. He could not speak and needed help to eat and breathe. Only his brain and one eyelid functioned normally. M Bauby was diagnosed as suffering from "locked-in" syndrome, a rare neurological condition in which the part of the brain that sends commands to the body is destroyed.

The former editor, who has

described his condition as being like a prisoner trapped inside an old-fashioned diving suit, nevertheless resolved to write a book. Just over a year later, M Bauby's courage and determination have been rewarded and *The Diving Suit and the Butterflies* will be published by Robert Laffont on Friday. Described by *Le Figaro* as poignant and distressing, the book is widely considered to be a tribute to the resilience of the spirit.

Translating the flight of the butter-

fly onto paper was an agonisingly slow process. Every day for a year, Claude Mendibil, an editor with Laffont, came to M Bauby's hospital room in Berck-sur-Mer, 50 miles south of Calais. She recited an alphabet in which the letters are ordered according to the frequency with which they occur in the French language. When she arrived at the desired letter, the paralysed man would wink and Mme Mendibil

wrote the letter down. By that laborious process, words and sentences and eventually whole pages of text were created.

M Bauby has not lost his sense of humour. Interviewed in *Elle*, he said: "I love the story of Claude going to a cafe after one of our long 'dictation' sessions. The barman gave her a big wink and she burst out laughing, leaving the poor man completely baffled."

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Rebels seize weapons from barracks as secret police start house-to-house searches

Beleaguered Berisha puts close aide at army's head



The Albanian President needs to know that soldiers will fire at civilians if ordered, writes Richard Owen in Tirana

THE Albanian Army began yesterday to disarm rebels in southern Albania under emergency regulations issued by President Berisha authorising troops to open fire on protesters carrying weapons.

The protesters continued to roam southern Albania at will, and much of the country appeared out of Tirana's control, casting doubt on the army's ability or willingness to restore order. Opposition leaders said many protesters were prepared to fight despite the Government's "shoot to kill" policy, and there was a risk of "serious bloodshed".

Army bases in Vlore and Himara were looted. In Vlore, a four-year-old girl was killed by a stray bullet while playing in her garden. The hospital in Vlore was looted by rebels who stole food and clothing, firing weapons in the corridors and operating rooms.

In a surprise move intended to tighten his grip on the

army, President Berisha, who was re-elected by parliament on Monday after ordering a state of emergency, sacked General Sheme Kosova, his Chief of Staff, and replaced him with his own military adviser, General Adem Copani. An official communiqué said General Kosova was directly responsible for "failing to defend army barracks in the south against looters".

The move also appeared aimed at countering soldiers' reluctance to fire on civilians, even if armed. Two weeks ago General Kosova personally oversaw the recapture of a strategic bridge taken by the rebels in the southern town of Memaliaj, but it was subsequently recaptured. The army lost credibility as a result with morale severely undermined.

The authorities said more than 1,500 weapons, looted from police and army arsenals last weekend in an orgy of rioting, had been handed in.



A masked man fires an AK47 outside the university in Vlore. Mayhem reigned as rebels looted army stores, fired into a hospital and seized a warship

But in Sarande, on the Adriatic coast, protesters declared their own "government" and army commanders simply told their troops to go home, according to television reporters in the area.

The Sarande rebels commandeered a passing warship from the naval base — part of the small and dilapidated Albanian Navy — and began firing at the coast. Further south, in Gjirokastra, a petrol station and hotel owned by Gjallica — one of the failed pyramid funds — was burnt

and looted. In Fier, close to Tirana, rebels in cars and lorries opened fire on an army barracks and seized army weapons until police arrived to rescue the local army commander. Army bases in Vlore and Himara were also looted.

The Berisha Government's attempt to impose a total news blackout was abandoned after international protests, with the European Broadcasting Union able to restore satellite links for foreign broadcasters, whose relay station was cut on Monday. A government spokesman said foreign journalists were free to report provided they "stayed within Albanian law".

Journalists were expelled from southern towns on Monday and were yesterday advised not to return "for their own safety ... because the situation in some towns is still not under the control of state institutions".

But the Albanian media remained muzzled, and officials insisted this was in accordance with European and United Nations conventions.

Pavle Mihal Qesku, the Albanian Ambassador in London, said the internal media restrictions were a temporary measure, but insisted that international coverage was unrestricted. He said the situation in Sarande and Vlore and a "stretch of land along the coast" was out of control, but this was only "a fraction of the country".

There were reports of a crackdown in Lushnje, 60 miles south of Tirana, with troops surrounding the town and carrying out house-to-house searches with agents of the feared secret police, the Shk. Troops in tanks and armoured personnel carriers also surrounded Vlore, the

Adriatic port at the centre of the rebellion.

Foreign residents, mainly Italians, evacuated from Vlore by helicopter on Monday said the town was still in the hands of armed rebels, many of them youths in their twenties wearing balaclavas or Palestinian-style keffiyehs and driving lorries and cars flying the Albanian flag, a black eagle on a red background.

"There is absolute mayhem in Vlore," one Italian businessman said. "Complete chaos, a free for all".

Albanian opposition leaders said they did not believe Albanian troops, a third of whom are conscripts, would open fire on their fellow citizens. "They are just boys in uniform," a member of the opposition Forum for Democ-

racy said. He said Mr Berisha would have to rely on the Shk to break the revolt, which began as a protest over lost savings but has snowballed into a general uprising.

Albanians woke up to a second day of martial law after a night of eerie calm, with police and troops enforcing a dusk-to-dawn curfew. The road to the south — which at Lushnje narrows to a single track over a bridge — remained closed by roadblocks manned by armed police and the secret police.

As dusk fell in Tirana, where a heavy security presence has stifled protests, Skanderbeg Square — normally the busy heart of Tirana — resembled a deserted stage set, dominated by the great mosque and an equestrian statue of Skanderbeg, Albania's national hero. There was the occasional rattle of unexplained gunfire from the suburbs nestling in the surrounding hills.

□ **Rome:** The pilot and copilot of an Albanian MiG15 jet

landed in southern Italy and requested asylum. The Defence Ministry said they were being questioned. (AP)

Leading article, page 19

General's mission to dragoon troops

By JAMES PITTIFER

THE sacking by President Berisha of Albania's army chief and the appointment of General Adem Copani in his place indicates the difficulty the right-wing Government is having in making the state of emergency effective.

The army was rapidly scaled down in the aftermath of communism, as it was a highly politicised behemoth for a small country, but it has never been fully re-equipped and suffers from many logistical and leadership weaknesses. Command is still influenced by the sons of Second World War partisans, most of whom come from the south and have

little instinctive sympathy with Mr Berisha.

General Copani has been Mr Berisha's right-hand man on military matters for the past five years, and has close links with Nato. He comes from the south and is a humane, intelligent man who is unlikely to seek a bloodbath. It is probable that he has been appointed to use his personal authority to bring rebellious southern officers and troops to heel, and to try to get the army to operate as an effective force in the south.

Moreover, if the military is going to become the de facto Government, links with Nato may be vital: Mr Berisha has been seeking German military assistance

since last autumn. General Copani is a tough, impressive man with an independent mind who embodies the old Ottoman proverb, "To the Armenian the pen, to the Albanian the sword". His appointment may offer a glint of hope for a reasonably peaceful resolution.

Mr Berisha's hope must be that General Copani can bring unity to a force that otherwise shows every sign of dissolving into antagonistic factions under the pressure of events.

It must remain doubtful, however, whether the military will be capable of maintaining discipline in a prolonged occupation of the rebellious southern towns.

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At last, the real clothes show

LONDON

Beautiful basic clothes for real women are back in fashion, says Iain R. Webb

During London Fashion Week, which ended on Friday evening, one critic described the latest collection by the designer Betty Jackson as "real clothes for real women". What, then, were the luxurious navy reefer jacket by Clements Ribeiro, the sleek, brown skirt suit by Alexander McQueen, or the exquisitely tailored leather trouser suits by Antonio Berardi, if not real clothes?

The autumn/winter 1997 collections featured some really good clothes, but more often than not these fine fashions were obscured by the designer's need to make a statement or give the catwalk show an edgy feel. To be thought of as "edgy" (as in at the cutting edge) is perhaps the ultimate accolade for a designer at present. It implies they are ultra-hip. Sadly, it also means their shows tend to be a bit pretentious or, in several cases, just plain ugly.

What possesses a designer to dress up some of the world's most beautiful women to look as if they have taken part in a "dirty protest" backstage (Berardi); been kept in a freezer for more than a month (Philip Treacy); or have a bloom in their cheeks so rosy it looks as if they have been hit with the vase as well (Jackson)?

At present, the fashion pack is obsessed with all things weird. They shy from the sensible, balk at the becoming and would not be caught dead applauding anything close to commercial.

Yet, more than ever this season, beyond the facade of horror-story hair and make-up and high-drama presentation, London showed that fashion can be enjoyed by everyone. If a nation of women sighed when they read that the mnu was back at Miu Miu, then, what the heck, wear the just-below-the-knee pencil skirts by Katherine Hamnett. If all you really want to buy next winter is a sweater, make sure it's plum, grey or bottle-green. If you want to update your wardrobe with a new accessory, get a knee-length, high-heel boot (best at Amanda Wakeley by Gina).

There were a few pleasant surprises (in store at the end of August, care of Sonja Nuttall).



Left to right: SONJA NUTTALL: Assured. CLEMENTS RIBEIRO: Sheer delight. ALEXANDER McQUEEN: A soft edge



English Eccentrics, Workers For Freedom and Jean Muir, while designers such as Ben de Lisi and Wakeley continued to make the most of their strong points: fluid cocktail and party dresses in smokey pink, plum, and purple, or luxurious minimalism cut in cream, butter, milk, chocolate, grey, and shocking pink, respectively. Both designers offered versions of the little black dress.

Design duo Pearce Fiona kept their fans happy with seriously sharp suits and slinky jersey separates, including a sexy double-layer split pencil skirt. Mostly monotone, and with a turban or two thrown in, the collection was made for a movie queen: Norma Desmond.

There was little change from Bella Freud and Jasper Conran — quirky, colourful and eclectic at Freud, while Conran showed his unique brand of grown-up glamour: feathers and leathers.

Nuttall returned with her strongest and most assured collection to date — everything from dove grey or navy windowpane check and pinstripe trouser suits worn with camisole tops or ribbed sweaters, to diaphanous metallic rose-print dresses, sometimes tied about the waist with a cashmere scarf. "Basic, beautiful clothes," says Nuttall.

The collections of English



Eccentrics (designed by Helen David) and Workers For Freedom were equally exquisite. David offered ultra-soft knits and sumptuous velvets alongside fragile-looking beaded pieces. Best of all was a honey-coloured, short-sleeved, roll-neck sweater worn with a long, matching skirt in Duchesse satin, all wrapped up in a sparkling organza shawl. WFF favoured equally seductive fabrics and a vaguely oriental silhouette cut in suede, silk, velvet and georgette, coloured honey, brown, red and pinky hues, plus the obligatory black.

There was a fresh modern mood at Jean Muir — little sweaters worn with knee-length A-line skirts; colourful velour stripes, punched suede, strappy camisole tops teamed with trousers or long skirts, and a neat, boxy leather jacket. Long georgette dresses in navy and black were pure Muir.

Tomasz Starzewski gets better each season — his elegant mix of brocade, satin, lace for

and leather looked sleeker than ever. At Mulberry, the accent was also on luxury, from the sumptuous sheepskins to a strictly tailored bronze brocade suit or full-length wraparound skirt edged in wine-red velvet.

Many designers, including Miu Miu, Nicole Farhi, Betty Jackson, Margaret Howell, Katharine Hamnett and Paul Firth, played around with mannish looks mixed with distinctly feminine touches — a wool or tweed coat over a sparkling sheath or a sliver of velvet, sportswear and glamour, leather and lace, sheepskin and sequins. Somewhat surprisingly, sheer is still an option for winter. Come on Mr Firth, get over it!

Berardi and Copperheat Blundell made much of sexy, hard-edged tailoring, with great leather jackets and second-skin dresses. Berardi added pretty frilly chiffons while Copperheat Blundell favoured furry fleece.

Knitwear fans will be pleased to see Lainey Keogh and Julian MacDonald on the London schedule. Both spin their own kind of magic with wool — rich and textured at Keogh, lightweight and airy-fairy at MacDonald.

If there was a wish-list this season then three names would be on it: McQueen, Hussein Chalayan and Clements Ribeiro, designers who have broken away from the pack and firmly established their names internationally.

McQueen, for all his eccentricities that threaten to cloud his vision, is unique. This season he portrayed the urban jungle



HUSSEIN CHALAYAN: Pure elegance made modern with razor-sharp cutting skills

with a breathtaking mélange of fabrics — sometimes patchworked together on the same outfit.

He startles by softening his tough edge with flowers. Aside from some quite awful "working-girl" looks (stretch denim leggings and Big Bird jackets), this collection screamed success.

It was pure elegance at Chalayan, made modern with his razor-sharp cutting skills. Slick tops and trousers (best in black or smoky blue) were followed by modish sweater-dresses and slinky jersey col-

ums. His suits (in black or bright red) followed a pencil-slim outline, while his tasseled and beaded evening dresses were the epitome of clean-cut chic. One black jersey dress with a firework starburst design was simply divine. The design duo Suzanne Clements and Ignacio Ribeiro make great clothes that are full of ideas — folksy motifs covered everything from smock dresses to men's jackets, while a sheer black shift slipped over a brightly coloured floral dress. Alongside the bolder looks

were stripey knits worn with baggy pants, sleek trouser suits and the smartest daytime mix of a reefer jacket, roll-neck sweater and slim below-the-knee skirt. It was a finely tuned collection which showed just why the husband and wife team have won such acclaim.

This season London Fashion Week turned out to be a real treat.

Photographer
CHRIS MOORE/
ANDREW THOMAS
• Iain R. Webb is the fashion director of *Elle* magazine.

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The McAlpine memoirs: Day Three – Parkinson is thrown to the wolves



Cecil and Ann Parkinson: Margaret Thatcher had told him that there was no need to resign, but advised him to reflect on the effect that carrying on might have on his family

The Parkinson affair surfaced in the summer of 1983. The Prime Minister rang me in Australia to tell me that John Selwyn Gummer was to be appointed to the chairmanship of the party. Gummer was totally different from Parkinson: where Parkinson was open and generous, Gummer was not. He was a politician not in the grand mould of Parkinson. Ridley or Tebbit.

When the party conference came in 1983, it was in Blackpool. Cecil Parkinson, instead of a hero, the winner of a great election victory, went to that conference as if he were a man on trial. Gummer distanced himself and took what could be regarded as the moral high ground. Making no attempt to save Parkinson, he left his colleague to the political wolves. The advantage was to himself. As Gummer's efforts at charming the Conservative Party were puny by comparison with those of Parkinson's, it must have been a matter of some convenience to watch his predecessor come unstuck. It appeared that, as far as Gummer was concerned, Parkinson was about to receive just punishment from God for his adultery.

John Wakeham rallied the whips. In all the years I have attended party conferences, I can't remember one where so many whips took the trouble to come to Blackpool on the day before the conference opening, a day when normally nobody was about except the serried ranks of the press. Sadly, the whips were not there to save Parkinson's career, rather to put an end to it. Michael Spicer set out to try to save him from a ministerial resignation. Gummer took Spicer's actions extremely badly and began to regale him and myself with a litany of all the awful things that Ann Parkinson had said about Spicer. As there was nothing that

An invitation to a hanging

THE PARKINSON AFFAIR

Confessions of THATCHER'S BAGMAN

Ann Parkinson could say or do that would make Spicer dislike her more than he disliked John Gummer; these words fell on deaf ears. As Michael Spicer and the Parkinsons were exceptionally close friends, I was shocked that Gummer should repeat the contents of what was obviously a desperate outburst by Ann Parkinson delivered in a private conversation at a time when she was under immense pressure. It was clear to me that the purpose of repeating that conversation was to alienate Michael Spicer from the Parkinsons.

Much later, when John Major came to power, I warned him, in print, that he should not put his trust in Gummer. "He is," I wrote, "not the sort of person that you would risk going for a walk in St James's Park, let alone the jungle." Gummer has begun to wither on the ministerial vine. Feeding his small daughter with hamburgers during a BSE scare, along with his general sanctimonious air will surely, in time, do for him.

The first evening of the conference, I gave a party as usual and Parkinson was there. He had made a good impression on the press. He was to speak at the conference the next day. The hall was electric with excitement; the organ tinkled; it was as if we waited for a wedding. This was going to be one of those moments that those habits of party conferences wait for and discuss for years afterwards. Cecil made his entrance. There was polite clapping where there should have been ecstatic applause. This man had, after all, devised a strategy that had won for his audience an election. The speech was of average quality, perfectly respectable and, considering the circumstances, downright brilliant. At the end the applause was at first supportive, but the chairman did not rise from his

seat nor continue clapping. The Conservative activists took their cue from John Selwyn Gummer: his was the party line. It was not a wedding that they had waited for, but a trial and as they left they wondered at what time would be the hanging.

Again that evening I gave a party for the senior figures of the media. Cecil and Ann Parkinson came and Cecil almost enjoyed himself. I felt terribly sorry for Ann. It was getting late, so Ann took him to their room. Half an hour later, Ann appeared in deep distress. The Times had rung through the text of Sara Keays's letter that they would publish the next day. Ann, Shirley Oxenbury and I went up to Cecil's bedroom, a small room at the back of the hotel. There followed the most extraordinary human drama that I have ever witnessed.

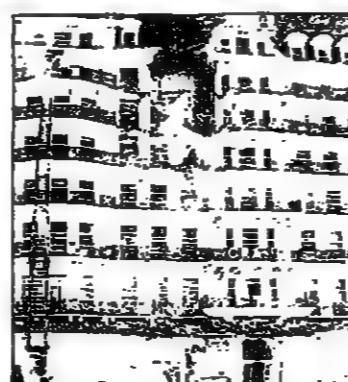
First, Robin Butler came with a message from the Prime Minister. Cecil was not to worry about *The Times* article: they would discuss it in the morning. Earlier, Margaret Thatcher had told Cecil that there was no need to resign, but advised him to

'What was meant as an act of kindness cost a life'

THE BRIGHTON BOMBING

My normal habit, I returned to my room and went to bed. I awoke on hearing a loud explosion. My bed was covered in plaster, the room full of dust. I switched on the lights and they worked. I looked out of the window to see the floodlights illuminating a huge cloud of dust.

My first thoughts were of immense relief. Those of us close to the leadership of the party had suspected that this would happen sooner or later. Now the attack had been made and I had survived. I looked out into the hotel's passage, a part of which seemed to have disappeared. I gathered together Richard Ryder, who was totally dazed having been in a deep sleep, and Michael Spicer, who had been in the bath. Out through the bathroom window we went, intending to go down the fire escape. Coming up the fire escape, however, was a group of hysterical Spanish women. We managed to turn around this stampeding herd of Spaniards



The Grand Hotel in Brighton

and sent them all in the right direction. Out in the street, I ran around the hotel to the front. I was among the first to get there. The street was deserted except for the police.

At first sight, the Grand Hotel stood there as if nothing had hap-

pened to it. Its facade was illuminated by yellow floodlights, a cloud of yellow dust hanging in the air. Then I could see that right in the centre of the hotel's facade was a hole, starting at the second floor and extending for several storeys. Out of the hotel came the most terrible cries. The sight and sounds will never leave me.

I hurried to the Metropole, a new hotel not far from the Grand. There we set up a party headquarters. Many people were of the opinion that the conference should close. Margaret Thatcher had been taken from the Grand to secure premises not far away. There had, however, been a hitch as she was leaving. First, the police sent out of the hotel a double, in case there were marksmen hiding nearby. A head was seen to rise over a parapet. Margaret Thatcher's departure was delayed.

Among the many problems of opening that conference on time the following morning was that most of

the hierarchy of the party had nothing to wear. We had to get them clothes, and quickly, and we decided the answer was to open Marks & Spencer as early as possible. I had, with a number of other people, found my way to Edward du Cann's rather grand suite in the Metropole. I used his telephone to ring Marks & Spencer's head office.

I spread the word among Brighton's taxi drivers that anyone without clothes was to be brought to M&S. I would, I told them, settle the fares. Luckily I had a considerable amount of cash on me. Standing outside the Marks & Spencer store, I waited for the first taxi and soon they came thick and fast. Inside, clothes were found for all those who needed them. I am proud to say that they never looked smarter. The £10,000 bill was paid by Central Office. It was quite illuminating afterwards to note which members of the party and the Government asked to pay for their new clothes and which members let the matter pass.

Those who feel the worst are probably the ones most likely to pay badly. After all, if you think there is something inherently shameful about paying someone to clean, that it is an act of slovenliness and extravagance, then the more you can do the better you'll feel. If you can justify having someone in because it doesn't cost that much, or because you can congratulate yourself on finding a

Evelyn Waugh had in *Scoop* a revolutionary who shouted at waiters in restaurants because the usual obscenities maintained the inquiries of the class system. I can't help feeling that union leaders who inveigh against those who employ domestics are behaving in much the same way.

TOMORROW

Christmas at Chequers



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YAMAHA

Do you pay the cleaner in guilt?

Domestic work is no more 'them and us' than any other employment

I suppose it shouldn't come as a surprise that the number of people in domestic employment has risen over the past five years after all, with more and more working couples, somebody's got to keep house. Consequently – as a new survey by the GMB union shows – the total has grown by 16 per cent, going from 142,000 people in domestic work to 166,000.

I doubt these figures are accurate; the real numbers must be much, much higher.

After all, cleaners and domestics tend to work for cash and are highly unlikely to be giving their details to the man or woman from the GMB union. But even the official figures alarm the union's leader, John Edmonds. They indicate to him that we are living in an 'us and them' age.

Mr Edmonds clearly thinks domestic work is demeaning, but surely he must see that it is that very belief which insults those who clean for a living. I would agree that domestic workers are routinely exploited and underpaid by their employers, but from what I can gather it is cleaning work in the public sector or large institutions that is the most exploitative and underpaid.

I have in the past employed people as cleaners who have also worked in hospitals (NHS and private); there, the conditions are worse and so is the pay. Cleaners tend to be treated as a job-lot of skivvies, interchangeable and expendable; their employers have little regard for them individually and indeed may not, probably don't, know their names.

Cleaning work is necessary work, for those who do the cleaning as well as those for whom they do it. Without wishing to sound too worthy, I'd say that it is essential that such work is respected. And I don't believe it can be respected if employing a cleaner must be a guilty secret. I would be surprised if cleaners didn't come in to clear up the offices of the GMB; does Mr Edmonds feel bad about this?

If he does, he would be rare among men. For the most part, men seem unperturbed about paying someone else to clean up after them (they seem pretty unperturbed about not paying someone to clear up after them, for that matter). It is women who feel ashamed about it. And I think men have got it right here: for surely we shouldn't feel embarrassed about paying someone to do a job, provided we pay them properly.

Perhaps an element of guilt is inevitable after all, one is paying someone to do the job one can't bear to do oneself. And domestic employment is bound to be a sensitive area, because in the home one doesn't have the distancing, neutralising structures of office and professional life. The relationship is more intimate and the notion of giving orders or exercising authority – even if neither is ever expressed as such – jars.

The reality is, of course, that cleaning work is no more "us and them" than any form of employment: there is always the person who pays and the person who is paid.

Evelyn Waugh had in *Scoop* a revolutionary who shouted at waiters in restaurants because the usual obscenities maintained the inquiries of the class system. I can't help feeling that union leaders who inveigh against those who employ domestics are behaving in much the same way.

fordable
althcare
00 66996

Alan Coren



■ What's got eight limbs, all-round vision and goes for a spin in safety?

You have to hand it to Reed Personnel Services. Quite what it is you have to hand to them, mind, must remain a matter of personal choice: some of you may wish to send them a big bunch of daffs, others may prefer to foot the bill for a major shrink, not a few may feel that the kindest act would be to leave a litigant on Reed's escritoire with one valedictory cartridge up the spout, but whichever each chooses, all must surely agree that, in recognition of their latest corking wheeze, the nation's top recruitment honchos deserve everything they get.

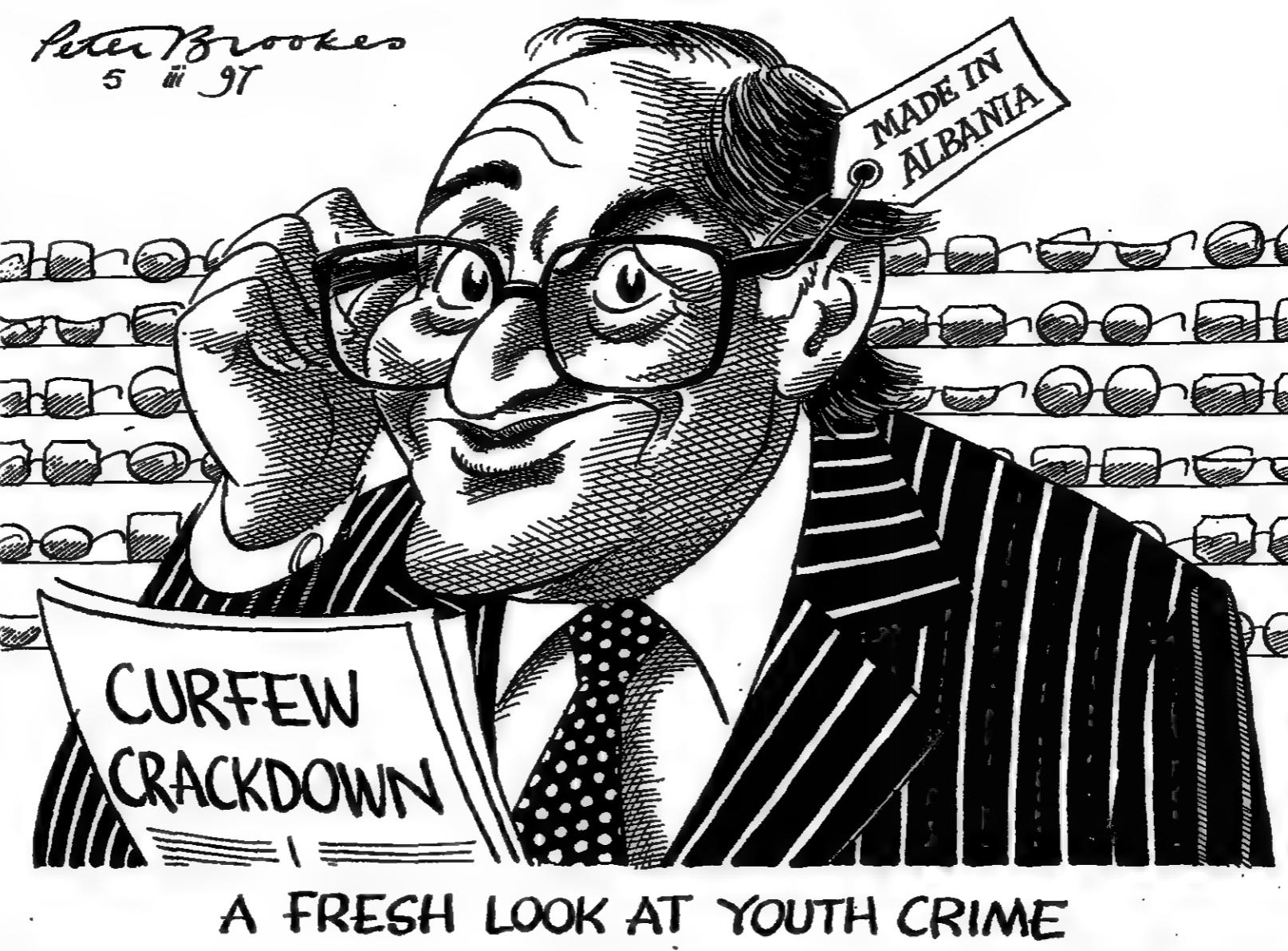
They have already got much. They have got 1,000 new ideas for the next government. Since this is rather more than 1,000 times the number of new ideas possessed by any of the parties currently begging to form that government, you are entitled to ask where Reed got all these new ideas from: the answer is from 38,000 Britons they recently mailed, thereby tapping a vein of amateur political inventiveness to such haemorrhage that, beside it, the professional one has been exposed as the thrombotic item it is, so clogged with clots as to betray even the most restrained hack into extended metaphors he can scarce control. And also to leave him spoilt for choice: ought I address myself to the suggestion that all MPs, before being allowed into the chamber, should be breathalysed, ought I consider the wisdom of offering free martial arts lessons to OAPs, ought I to confute the two and envisage that joyous day when 59 drunks forced to mooch the Commons forecourt are set upon by mobs of kung-fu grannies incensed by the House's failure to — a third new idea, this — provide them with free fresh fish? None of these, I plump today for a yet more radical notion, not only because it addresses what Reed identifies as a prime area of concern (roads), but also because its wondrous wackiness invites me to trump it with a new idea of my own far more likely to mitigate that concern.

The Reed-borne idea is to fit a pointed steel spike to the centre of every steering wheel, thus ensuring road safety by persuading motorists to drive everywhere very slowly, to avoid ending up *en brochette*. Now, knowing drivers as I do, I could conclude only that this idea must have been sent in by an undertaker, so at once began working on mine. Call it Idea 1,001. It is, admittedly, a longer-term solution than the spike, but this in no way diminishes its electoral clout, because, for the next few weeks, the idea is all that counts, and mine is unquestionably one whose time has come.

For this is a genetic time, so the solution to our gravest worry must surely be not to destroy unsafe motorists, but to create safe ones. And the reason motorists are unsafe is that man was originally designed to move at a top speed of 15mph, for which two eyes, four limbs, slow reflexes, and frangible bones were perfectly adequate; if he crashed into another man, each got up, shook himself, and trotted on. But when man invented a tin box empowering him to move at ten times his natural speed, his natural kit proved to be so unfitted to cope with this that he began killing himself and his kind in untried new ways. Man, it turned out, was not made right. The solution, therefore, lies in his genes.

Or will. His genes must be tinkered with. Man needs three limbs for the pedals, two for the wheel, one for the gearstick, one for the car-phone, and one to lash out at offspring distracting him from behind. He also needs eyes both in the back of his head and on either side of it, a body able to be buried through the air without injury, and reflexes keyed split-second evasive action in any direction. Also, it wouldn't hurt if, on top of all this, he had mouth programmed to snap up any intruding fly dumb enough to buzz hazardously across his vision.

Yes, you have twigged. I am talking about the arachnid gene, rush the Spider Bill through on May 2, and within a generation, only those able to show the anatomical they can read eight number-plates simultaneously and run up the MOT wall will be granted a licence. As to which party will triumph with this little winner, who can say, but Reed's think-tank must be delighted that, for once, Lord Sutch is in there with a chance.



Two faces of Englishness

However different, the squire and the sybarite were both defenders of excellence

Two men of my acquaintance were laid to rest last week. Family and friends gathered at the respective churches. Eulogies were delivered on happy lives and successful careers. England bade farewell to its sons with due ceremony.

The two could not have been less alike. One was a Cavalier, the other a Roundhead, one an Anglican, the other a Dissenter, one a Tory, the other never. Drap the one in a Union Jack and he would cheer; the other would groan. Both would term themselves middle-class, but the contrast between them was almost Disraelian, "inhabitants of different planets, formed by different breeding, fed by different food, ordered by different manners". Yet both were English, indeed together they were the warp and woof of Englishness. One was Sir Joshua Rowley Bt, late Lord-Chancellor of Suffolk. The other was Christopher Driver, late of *The Guardian*.

Sir Joshua was the 7th Baronet, of Tendring in the county of Suffolk. He began his career at Eton, Cambridge and the Grenadiers. His rubicund face and jovial smile used to beam down the dinner tables of Suffolk, down which Rowley had beamed since the 18th century. Though descended from admirals, Rowley followed his father into the Guards. He served in Africa and Italy and was captured by the Germans. After the Army, he married a viscount's daughter and settled down as squire, farmer and county grande. Suffolk landscape was his life and his love, low hills and wide valleys, hedges and spinneys, game and dogs, half-timbered and claret and Constable. Rowley worked with (squires do not work for) the National Trust, and rose to be chairman of Suffolk County Council. He had an East Anglian's care for money, but was no philistine. He collected books and pictures and wore his culture with an easy charm.

The family once shared with Poles. Bacons and Greenes a suzerainty over southern Suffolk. They formed the refrain to "Froggy would a'woing go", an otherwise obscure reference to the four families as Rowley, Pole, Gammie and Spinach. The Rowley seat was Tendring Hall at Stoke-by-Nayland. The house decayed and was sadly demolished in the 1960s. Sir Joshua regretted its demolition, and committed himself through the National Trust to saving such houses in future.

He held onto the Tendring land with its sumptuous views over Dedham Vale. Restoring Stoke church was a life's work and he was buried last week in the shadow of its great tower. A grave could ask for no finer guardian.

In days when local government was as proud a service in England as it still is in the rest of Europe, Rowley ran Suffolk. To him, politics was the ordering of land, service to parish and county, and to the Crown through the lord-lieutenancy. London for Rowley was Purdey's, Pratt's and the MCC. Parliament was for younger sons, tradesmen and odd-balls. Real men ran counties.

This was the politics that the Thatcher-Major Conservative Party has torn apart.

Inspectors, directors and John Gummer were sent to tell Sir Joshua Rowley and his successors that they could not be trusted to fix so much as a penny rate. Mr Gummer knew better than a Rowley what was good for Suffolk. Rowley's face on this subject was pure Colonel Blimp. The smile froze, the eyes bulged, the red of the cheeks darkened and the veins appeared ready to burst.

Rowley was a conservative but not a pessimist. He was sure that Suffolk would survive the assaults of London politicians, as the National Trust would survive its "confounded bureaucrats". But conserving Suffolk was a perpetual bane. It needed the commitment of those who knew buildings and land, who felt an obligation to those who worked them. It needed local autonomy, money and a fear of God. Above all it needed people like Rowley.

I wonder how Christopher Driver would have described Rowley. Driver was the son of a Nonconformist doctor-missionary in south India. His parents had money enough to see him through a similar educational mill to Rowley's. He went to the Dragon School, was head boy of Rugby and read Greats at Christ Church. Yet as Cambridge could not

divert Rowley from his paternal course, nor could Oxford divert Driver. Not for him the Grenadiers but, as a conscientious objector, the Friends Ambulance Service, followed by the news desk of the *Liverpool Daily Post*. Not for him the deputy secretaryship of the National Trust, but the editorship of *The Good Food Guide*. Driver was, as Bill Webb recalled in last week's *Guardian*, "a Christian with mandarin tastes, a serious sybarite and a bit of a snob".

I venture that only an English reader

could fully appreciate the nuance of epithets applied half-admiringly to Driver that would be offensive applied to Rowley.

The gulf is not cultural, and is only partly social. No war, politics, business or profession was likely to bring these two together. Rowley's rural Toryism would have been anathema to Driver's urban radicalism, and vice versa. Driver's career began with that colonial service of left-wing journalism, a sojourn on a northern newspaper. But he soon returned to his natural habitat in Highgate, where his family played quarts of conceding a housing estate here or a bypass there. Rural England required faith, and faith without shortcuts. If Dedham Vale could not sustain a way of life, it would simply be "The Constable Experience". Social and natural ecology were indissoluble. The landscape would not conserve itself. To Sir Joshua, this was today's *noblesse oblige*.

Rowley would have cried Amen to Driver's *Times* obituary. It recalled his acerbity towards all who served a sloppy word or served a heavy sauce. "He was not inclined to reassure those who betrayed their calling by letting standards slip," it said. For him, standards were equally a well-judged soufflé or a well-timed royal visit. For both men, attention to detail was a token of excellence. In their divergent walks of life, both saw that excellence threatened and desperately short of defence.

As of last week, the ranks of the defenders are depleted by two.

Simon Jenkins

roast beef of old England, albeit served with a noble Pomerol, Driver's was steamed brill and mangonut. His fallback was chicken korma with saffron: he lauded the Chinese and Indians for bolstering English catering through its darkest post-war years. But when the Young Turks of the bistro graduated to smart restaurants in the 1970s, Driver was attacked as a killjoy. He gave not an inch, deriding his critics as "a branch of showbusiness". Eventually, *The Guardian* claimed him back, to bring a unique elegance to writing about food. His book *The British at Table 1940-1980* is a masterpiece of sardonic prose.

Driver's town pursuits were as varied as Rowley's country ones. He wrote on the Free Churches, Schubert, universities, CND and poetry. Some Englishmen wear incorruptibility on their sleeves. Driver would have been a preacher in Cromwell's New Model Army, had he not been a pacifist. That his integrity was dedicated to all things, restaurant cooking may seem eccentric. But like the best intellectuals, Driver was "silent in seven languages". He would have murmured as he perused another menu, "God is in the details".

Perhaps I can find here a final meeting of the ways. In my last conversation with Rowley, I recall his fixation with "getting the countryside right". This was not a matter of balancing subsidies, of conceding a housing estate here or a bypass there. Rural England required faith, and faith without shortcuts. If Dedham Vale could not sustain a way of life, it would simply be "The Constable Experience". Social and natural ecology were indissoluble. The landscape would not conserve itself. To Sir Joshua, this was today's *noblesse oblige*.

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A united states of the euro?

America's founders show the way, says

Gary L. McDowell

Malcolm Rifkind's speech in Paris this week laid bare the deepest issue in the debate over EU and the push for monetary union: Britain's continued independence and the future of the nation-state. No doubt his speech will do little to quiet the snarling and snapping, but he at least has history on his side, as even the most cursory glance at the original American debate over federalism reveals.

Many of the questions now being raised in Britain were at issue during the creation of the United States Constitution in 1787-88. The concerns that led the Americans to draft their new Constitution, like those that have led Europe towards greater integration, were economic and trade. The sovereignty of the federated states under the Articles of Confederation (America's first Constitution) was not conducive to the kind of cooperation that a union of states has to have to encourage commerce. To remedy this, the states resolved to meet and reach agreements on how best to unite in order better to serve their common interests. As various efforts failed to produce the needed agreements, they were eventually driven to what became the Constitutional Convention of 1787, at which more far-reaching decisions were taken and the nature of the confederation was drastically changed.

A key element of this transformation dealt with the power to coin money, regulate its value, and to establish the value of foreign currency. The American founders understood, as the great jurist Blackstone had said, that the "coining of money is in all states the act of the sovereign power". Under the Articles of Confederation, the states had held with the central authority a concurrent power to coin money. The failure to give the national authority complete power in this area was deemed by many, as James Madison put it, "a material omission" in that early Constitution.

In the US Constitution ultimately ratified in 1788, this problem was addressed in two provisions. The first empowered the newly created Congress to exercise the power "to coin money, regulate the value thereof, and of foreign coin". At the same time, this new and strongly national document unambiguously prohibited such powers from being exercised by the several states: "No state shall... coin money; emit bills of credit; make anything but gold and silver coin a tender in payment of debts". State sovereignty would never be the same.

The logic that had led to this was powerful and ultimately convincing. The great objectives sought by the confederation could not be achieved under its existing, decentralised forms of governance. There had to be something beyond the sum of the parts, and that had to be a true government with power sufficient to make the several constituent states abide by the decisions made at the national level. Part of the reason early Americans moved in this direction was that the states had not conducted themselves well. There had been a plethora of noxious legislation at the state level, ranging from the abolition of debts to what the founders derided as the "rage for paper money". The result had been laws detrimental to the rights of property and of individuals. If the young commercial republic was to succeed and prosper, the old confederation simply had to give way.

Parallels are tricky, often appearing to be more apposite than they are.

But one cannot help noticing in the American experience traces of theoretical concerns that are much the same in the current debate over European monetary union and whether Britain should take part. On the one hand, it is not unreasonable to suggest that a single currency would greatly facilitate trade within a market that is truly common. But on the other hand, it is equally clear that the power to coin money is an essential part of sovereignty, and to cede so fundamental a power would indeed strike at the very heart of British independence. Those who doubt the soundness of a single currency for that reason may well find in the American experience lessons that suggest even greater caution.

This is because the deepest lesson to be drawn from America's founding debates goes beyond the particular concerns such as the power to coin money. What the creation of the American republic shows is that confederations rarely work. The most theoretically sophisticated of those early Americans was Madison, who prepared for the Constitutional Convention by steeping himself in the histories of previous confederacies. His conclusion was that the centrifugal pull of member states is almost always too strong, and that there was rarely to be found anything beyond the sum of the parts. The ultimate solution to the vices of the confederal form was to transcend it and move towards a more consolidated national government.

If Madison was right, if there is always a deficiency to be found in confederations, then the implications for the debate in Britain over a single currency are even more profound, because there will be a gradual movement towards greater integration at the expense of the sovereignty of the member nations. This will all be done in the name of expediency, arguing that such a movement is nothing more than the drawing out of the implications of the original agreement. Such clear examples of the diminution of sovereignty as monetary union will, if undertaken, be looked back upon as the first step towards something very different from mere confederation for purposes of trade.

Billy boy

PRESIDENT Clinton should have thought twice the other night before he went to see the musical *Chicago* at a New York theatre with his wife. Not only is the show of a raunchy nature, with plenty of bawdy showgirls and frolicksome dance routines, but one of the songs, delivered by doe-eyed beauties in garters and bustiers, runs "We want Billy — give us Billy!" At this, all eyes in the theatre turned to Clinton, who very obviously started to stroke Hillary's arm.

Moments later, a character on stage gave a line which talked about what women of dubious morals will "touch for a deuce". Someone at the back of the auditorium shouted "Paula Jones!" — the woman suing Clinton for alleged gross indecency some years ago — which caused a ripple of giggles. The President, fast becoming embarrassed, kissed Mrs Clinton on the head.

When it came to another line in the show which runs "whatever happened to pure ethics?", fellow audience members were in the desperate stages of laughter-control, stuffing hankies in their mouths, holding their noses against the pressure of rising

mirth, and dabbing tissues at near-dampened eyes.

Even the chorus girls were having a hard time not corning. It may be some time before the Clintons risk another trip to a Broadway show.

Pre-election tension is mounting at Referendum Party headquarters in Horseferry Road, where the managing director, Malcolm Glenn, has confiscated

RAFLE TO WED
"To turn me Tory they'd have to marry off Ted Heath"

the staff-room television. It was meant to be used for watching the news, but Glenn snapped when he found his troops lounging around, gripped by a programme about the fathers of prostitutes.

Early fears

POLITICAL documentary-maker Michael Cockerell has a new hero. Preparing to lecture at the National Film Theatre tomorrow about our politics and broadcasting over the century, Cockerell came across Cecil Hepworth, who arranged the first "kinematograph interviews" with leading politicians, back in the First World War.

In 1916, he was planning to film a meeting of Lloyd George's Cabinet, but when the story leaked out, his arrangements had to be cancelled. He wrote: "The Cabinet feared ridicule: how the people of a few years hence will laugh at the dignity which was afraid of being sullied by contact with the 'kinematograph'." Cockerell knows exactly what he meant.

There were sharp words yesterday when the Foreign Secretary met the Burmese Ambassador to London, U Win Aung. Malcolm Rifkind had been reluctant to meet a representative of the State Law and Order Restoration Council, the fiendishly anti-democratic

DIARY

FOR all their dark reputation, the Tory whips have a soft, giving side, as they showed yesterday when they found some spare tickets for the party of Ben Chapman, the new Labour MP for Wirral South, who arrived to take his seat. Ten members of the Chapman family and friends came to see Chapman installed, and the Labour whips did not have enough tickets for them all to sit in the Strangers' Gallery. Labour's men approached Murdo Maclean, the private secretary to Alastair Goodlad, the Tory chief whip, who rustled up two spare tickets, despite the drubbing Chapman gave the Conservatives last week. "We would have done the same," says an ungratefully installed Labour whip.

NUDE dancers brightened up the English National Opera's terrific new production of Gluck's *Orfeo and Eurydice* (at under an hour and a half it is ideal for those who regard opera as an inconvenience between drinks and dinner). Tastefully choreographed by the American Martha Clark, the dancers, who also performed clothed, strip off as Orpheus roves through the Elysian fields in search of his dead lover.

Sadly, they declined to pose for publicity photographs. "They left

it was one thing to dance naked for artistic reasons appropriate to the scene," explained a spokesman, "but quite another to do it for still photographs which might end up who knows where."

Seating plan

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Whisky survived, writes Mrs Patten, but other pets have not been so lucky. She suggests owners muzzle their pets, urges passers-by to watch for any suspicious behaviour in the area, and concludes: "Who knows, one day a child may be affected."

Lavender with half a drink

Patt, Patten's wife Lavender recounts how she was walking the dogs, Whisky and Soda, along a popular trail when Whisky snapped up a piece of chicken. It was later found to be soaked in an insecticide-style poison.

Whisky survived, writes Mrs Patten, but other pets have not been so lucky. She suggests owners muzzle their pets, urges passers-by to watch for any suspicious behaviour in the area, and concludes: "Who knows, one day a child may be affected."

P.H.S.



JOHN AND BRIAN

The Tories need to become the party of one message

Another day, another relaunch. John Major's decision to face a phone-in programme on Radio 5 Live was doubtless designed to seize the initiative. As so often in the past, he offered a solid performance but was obliged to excuse the latest embarrassment caused by his colleagues. Stephen Dorrell's indiscretion has been read as a reflection of his own ambition to lead the Tories. If so, Mr Major should take some comfort: it means that the occupant of Number Ten is currently heading only the second most improbable campaign in British politics.

With, at most, eight weeks until election day arrives there are clear limits on what the Conservatives can do to alter their fate. The imprint of 18 years in power is not one that spin-doctors can eradicate. No seismic shift in the personality or leadership style of the Prime Minister can be credibly created. Nor, in truth, could policy positions be dramatically redefined. Even on Europe and the single currency, where party strategists rightly yearn to take a much tougher line than the Chancellor will permit, a sudden change at this stage is extremely unlikely and would reek of insincerity if it came.

The Conservatives' best hope lies in linking their two strongest cards: the state of the economy and public uncertainty about new Labour. They can still argue that better times would be badly threatened by a change of government. Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, despite a prolonged and laudable effort on their part, have not yet convinced voters that the economy is safe in their hands. The same polls that show the Tories trailing by 20 points also reveal real fears of higher taxes, spending and interest rates if Labour win. The latest Conservative poster blitz — "Tony and Bill" — may be so crude as to undermine its own effectiveness. But it is located in the right territory.

If the coming contest is solely centred on the question of who can best protect the prosperity Britain has recently enjoyed, therein lies the Tories' one slim chance. Almost any discussion of different issues is a

distraction that will ultimately benefit Mr Blair. The whole Cabinet has to stick to that single script without deviation. Labour will doubtless claim with indignation that this constitutes the most negative approach in political history. All that matters for Mr Major is that it might be effective.

That message itself is more important than the messengers. Nevertheless, prospects would be improved if the Prime Minister stood squarely and publicly behind his party chairman. The purported election roles of Lord Cranborne, Sarah Hogg and Jonathan Hill has allowed, perhaps unfairly, an unflattering comparison with the famously fractious 1987 campaign to develop. The position of Michael Heseltine as the main media frontman adds a further element of uncertainty. The 35-year-old William Hague would be better placed than the Deputy Prime Minister to dispute the Labour charge that it is time for a change.

Brian Mawhinney may well lack warmth and personal charm. But the staff he has selected at Smith Square are strikingly superior to those of five years ago. His party conference last year was an unexpected success. The "New Labour, New Danger" advertising effort may have been controversial but it was also distinctive. Government performance, not party presentation, has been the problem that persistently handicaps the Conservatives. Mr Major has already been through three Central Office supremos in this Parliament. He should strive to reinforce the current one.

There is no point in Conservatives wishing for a campaign that will not happen. Like it or not, their record, leader, and core policies are all fixed. The search for some extra magic element will add only confusion not clarity. Instead the party of One Nation needs to become the party of one message. Conservative Central Office has operated on that principle for some time. If ministers cannot, or will not, manage that then they might as well go back to their constituencies and prepare for opposition.

ALBANIA'S PRESS

Freedom of speech must be restored — and fast

One of the most important indications that Sali Berisha was leading Albania towards a more open and democratic society was his tolerance of a pluralist press. And one of the most depressing aspects of his response to the turmoil now engulfing the country was his immediate censorship of all news media, the blackout in the transmission of satellite television pictures from Tirana and the ban on foreign journalists travelling outside the capital. The authoritarian response, learnt during 45 years of isolation and dictatorship, cast doubt on President Berisha's commitment to press freedom and pluralist democracy, which are the foundations of all the European political, military and economic organisations Albania aspires to join.

The immediate outcry in the West appears to have forced the Albanians to think again. The Foreign Ministry now says that the press restrictions, promulgated in the state of emergency, do not apply to foreign news organisations. Television pictures may again be broadcast from Albania. The heavy-handed turning back of journalists at police blocks on roads leading out of Tirana has been replaced with official "advice" that travel in the south was unsafe.

There has been no let-up, however, in the restrictions on local media. Indeed, the most sinister development has been the increasing intimidation, not only of the press but of all opposition activists. Behaving with the same ruthlessness that made Enver Hoxha's secret police among the most hated in any dictatorship, Shki plainclothes thugs have been threatening foreign and domestic journalists, smashing their cars and inciting

crowds to turn on those suspected of reporting the violence. Under the cover of darkness and curfew, Shki agents have set fire to newspaper buildings. No wonder more than half the population now listen to the BBC to try to find out what is going on.

The Albanian Government accuses foreign journalists of inciting violence. To impose such a motive betrays a feeble grasp of impartial reporting, a concept that had no meaning in Albania's postwar history and is, clearly, still deeply suspect, especially to Mr Berisha. It is not likely to become clearer to him now. Violence has fed on the attention it has drawn to the protesters' grievances, he must. Former Communists, opportunists and criminals have taken advantage of the popular anger, and copycat looting and burning has quickly led to anarchy. Ancient tribal enmities between the Tosks in the north, where Mr Berisha draws his support, and the Ghegs in the south, where Hoxha came from, are also now a factor.

Mr Berisha is still the elected leader, although his wooden, surreal re-election on Monday by parliamentary acclaim had all the pretence of an old-style dictatorship. The ultimatum to the rioters and armed gangs now roaming the south to hand over their weapons is justified, though hopes of restraint by the police and army are probably not. The cost of the upheaval is already incalculable, and Albania's fumbling attempts to escape grinding poverty will be set back years. Democracy is staggering in Europe's poorest country. If it is not to be stifled altogether, free voices must be restored to print and the airwaves.

It strikes me that the decision described in Jan Morris' letter, Sir David's Davy dates largely from the time, some 18 years ago, when the Welsh voted against having their own elected assembly. A nation which lacks the backbone for a democratic forum of its own is bound to become a laughing stock amongst yobs.

Later this year, we shall probably have an opportunity to redeem ourselves in another referendum. This time let us bear in mind that thousands of the English refugees who have managed to escape to a more community-minded Wales will be helping to stiffen our democratic resolve.

Yours faithfully,
JAN BOWEN REES.
Tal-Sarn, Llanlechid,
Bangor, Gwynedd.
March 2

MURDER MOST LITERARY

The Times helps to teach the tricks of a noble trade

It was a dark and stormy night just as the oldest and best thrillers start. Nevertheless, last night hundreds turned out for a debate on the art of literary murder. They could easily have stayed at home beside the fire, snatching at the pages to find out how a down-and-out dossier came to starve to death in the wealthy architect's garage, although there was plenty of food within reach. Instead, they chose to brave the storms for *The Times*/Dillons forum on the subtle art of contemporary crime writing.

Why? Partly they represented the modern hunger for live and public entertainment instead of the broadcast and private kind. Some were attracted by the celebrity of the speakers. Colin Dexter is the eagle of the public, broadcast far beyond the reading public by his *Inspector Morse* on television. Minette Walters is the eagle, whose psychological drama about the case of the hungry tramp stands fourth on the bestseller list. But a number came to learn how to do the trick themselves. Write-it-yourself courses are now extremely popular, and a useful extra source of income for those who have proved publicly that they can write and, better still, get themselves published.

Ever since Sherlock Holmes, Englishmen have been born with a detective story fixed to their umbilical cords. Ever since Miss Marple, Englishwomen have been even better at the native genre. And crime writing should be easier to teach than other sorts. Much crime writing is formulaic. Readers

like it that way, as familiar as old slippers. They want their surprises in the plot, not in the manner or the mannerism of the writing. One virtue of the detective story is that it is a comfortable solace, a sort of mental knitting where it does not matter much if you drop a stitch. The readers of a mystery story want to get to the end of it, to find out what happened to the dossier. The readers of a Dickens or Henry James story wish that it might never end. They read a Dickens or James story six times because they know it so well. They read a detective story six times because they can forget its ending six times.

Of course, crime writing comes in many covers, from the old-fashioned detective story, with a body in the garage and a solution, to the thud and blunder of American cops and the nightmare shores of Rendellian psychosis. But crime writing has to be professional and well-crafted. The field is crowded. The best thrillers perform the honourable old function of keeping the pages turning. The crime story is an extension of the fairytale and the older myth. It is melodrama so camouflaged as to create the illusion that the story being told, however improbable, could be true. Some tricks can be taught. Perhaps Minette Walters and Colin Dexter brought on some new talent last night. The new crime writers will also need lively imaginations and considerable skill with words, never forgetting the doggedness to apply bottom to chair until the daily quota is written.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN NYE.
20 Court Road,
Tunbridge Wells, Kent.
March 3

McAlpine memoir taken to task

From Baroness Falkender

Sir, May I comment upon the extract about myself from Alastair McAlpine's "knock-about" memoir, which appears in *The Times* today.

That message itself is more important than the messengers. Nevertheless, prospects would be improved if the Prime Minister stood squarely and publicly behind his party chairman. The purported election roles of Lord Cranborne, Sarah Hogg and Jonathan Hill has allowed, perhaps unfairly, an unflattering comparison with the famously fractious 1987 campaign to develop.

I recently accepted an invitation from Lord Hanson to have drinks at the home of two of his closest friends and colleagues — who were my friends too. Political advisers often receive invitations in this way. Harold Wilson, for whom I was still working, strongly urged me to accept since he always hoped that more might be learned then and later about the background to the very nasty stories circulating at that time, culminating in the *Spitcatcher* outpourings and continued to this day. On that particular occasion there were exchanges about those stories in particular as well as the political scene in general.

My views were in any case well known at the time. I was involved in a series of articles for the London *Evening News* during the election period, so what I thought was public knowledge.

The Labour Party did not refuse to pay my salary in 1974. They had never paid my salary at any time, either then, before, or after. They were never asked to do so, and had they offered the offer would have been refused.

It is no revelation that I "was very taken with the idea of having a woman prime minister". It was public knowledge at that time from articles, interviews, and elsewhere that I found the idea very interesting indeed. A large number of women, both in the Labour Party and elsewhere shared that interest. Indeed, more recently Mr Blair himself has gone further and expressed qualified admiration for Margaret Thatcher. In 1975, only two of Harold Wilson's immediate circle, namely Peter Shore and myself, had felt that it would be difficult if not impossible for Labour to win against a woman Prime Minister. We were right. And that was without the Winter of Discontent and a badly chosen election date.

As to my alleged "contempt ... for the people who ran the Labour Party", referred to by Alastair, it was not "incredible". It was non-existent. I have often been saddened and disillusioned by the disloyalty and desertion in politics — on all sides — but contempt never, for that is a bitter and unhealthy characteristic and politics is a rough trade.

Alastair is a very intelligent, funny and gregarious fellow, with many friends and admirers, and it is always interesting and enjoyable to be in his company. I have known him since he first visited Downing Street during the 1974-75 period, when he even half-jokingly suggested, after meeting Harold Wilson, that he felt he, Alastair, ought to join Labour. But like us all, he has now in his dotage, unaware of the agendas of others, taken to living in his own private bubble where perhaps all is not exactly as he perceived it to be.

Yours sincerely,
MARIA FALKENDER.
3 Windham Mews,
Upper Montagu Street, W1.
March 3

No joking matter

From Dr Iain Bowen Rees

Sir, In my days at school and university in England the Welsh were hero-worshipped for their superior state education, their classlessness, their progressive politics, their singing and their sport.

It strikes me that the decision described in Jan Morris' letter, Sir David's Davy dates largely from the time, some 18 years ago, when the Welsh voted against having their own elected assembly.

The ultimate to the rioters and armed gangs now roaming the south to hand over their weapons is justified, though hopes of restraint by the police and army are probably not.

The cost of the upheaval is already incalculable, and Albania's fumbling attempts to escape grinding poverty will be set back years.

Democracy is staggering in Europe's poorest country. If it is not to be stifled altogether, free voices must be restored to print and the airwaves.

It is still part of our common law that, save in exceptional circumstances, a third party may not give financial assistance to a litigant where that party has no legitimate interest in the proceedings. It would be hard, if not impossible, for a newspaper to claim that financing civil proceedings on behalf of the Lawrence family amounted to a legitimate interest.

Litigation for most of us is very expensive. It is beyond the means of

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9KN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Politics of hope: personal liberty v traditional morality

From Professor David Conway

Sir, May I comment upon the extract you published last week from his book, *The Politics of Hope* (February 22-23). Rabbi Jonathan Sacks contends that much of the sorry state of civic life in Britain today can be attributed to the displacement of traditional Judeo-Christian morality by the abstract secular individualism brought into prominence by the Enlightenment. A more secure and convivial social order, he argues, would follow the reinstatement of these values at the heart of public life and morality.

Not so, argues Rabbi David Goldberg (letter, February 27):

The Judeo-Christian tradition was an all-embracing value system. Its ideal form of government was a theocracy. Principles we take for granted, like democracy, freedom of belief, equality of the sexes, are a result of the Enlightenment, not the Judeo-Christian tradition.

One can understand such an objection being advanced by a secularist. When voiced by someone professing to stand within the tradition, they are truly astonishing. How can any self-proclaimed Jew or Christian, let alone a rabbi (however liberal), take exception to theocracy as a political ideal?

Every week on the Sabbath, when putting away the scrolls of the Pentateuch after reading from them their weekly portion, Jews throughout the world call upon God to "return unto the ten thousands of thousands of Israel" and "renew our days as of old". What is this but a plea for God to send his promised messiah, or anointed, to restore the Israelite theocracy and thereby usher in an age of everlasting peace and justice?

Yours sincerely,

DAVID SELBOURNE,
United Oxford & Cambridge
University Club,
71 Pall Mall, SW1.
March 2

From Mr Nicolas Walter

Sir, Jonathan Sacks's "politics of hope" is full of good intentions but also full of bad arguments. As Simon Jenkins points out today, virtually all his factual and theoretical claims are open to obvious objections.

It is especially futile to attempt the rehabilitation of the Judeo-Christian tradition, when its origins are so dubious and its effects so ambiguous, and when so many of our most precious values (humanity, rationality and secularism; liberty, equality and fraternity; reciprocity, democracy and solidarity) arose before or outside or after it.

It is also ultimately fatuous to devalue the Enlightenment and secular humanism, when they share so many of Jonathan Sacks's own aims and provide so much surer bases for them. As he said himself (February 21) he worked with Hugo Gryn in spite of rather than because of their religion, "for the sake of their common humanity". That is our best hope.

Yours etc.
NICOLAS WALTER,
Rationalist Press Association,
88 Islington High Street, N1.
March 1

From Mr David Selbourne

Sir, Simon Jenkins ("Dr Sacks's road to Salem", March 1) accuses the Chief Rabbi of "moral hysteria" for his observations on our civic condition. Yet he himself employs the most fevered of images and the most violent of terms with which to denounce Dr Sacks for his (rather anodyne) moral objections.

As to Jenkins' bluster, no civic order which in the name of protecting

systematic use of forced labour, including child labour.

Approval of the proposal by EU foreign ministers was expected at the General Affairs Council meeting on February 24. The vote has now been postponed until March 24 at the earliest.

Withdrawal of trade privileges is a vital first step, for which there can be no acceptable delay. We urge the EU to send this clear message to Burma's ruling generals on the need for urgent reform.

Yours truly,
BILL JORDAN
(General Secretary, ICPU),
GLENYS KINNOCK,
DENIS MacSHANE,
YVETTE MAHON
(Co-ordinator),
The Burma Action Group UK,
Collins Studios,
Collins Yard, Islington Green, N1.
February 26

From Dr Iain Bowen Rees

Sir, According to the British Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, discussions at the Asia-Europe ministerial meeting in Singapore on February 15 "reflected the seriousness" of the deteriorating human-rights situation in Burma.

Why then does the international community, the EU included, fail to take even limited punitive action against Burma's ruling military dictatorship?

Burma looks set to enjoy a welcome into the Association of South East Asian Nations this year, whilst the EU appears to be dragging its heels over the Commission's recommendation on December 18 that it withdraw preferential market access for Burmese industrial goods because of Burma's

many people who do not qualify for legal aid, leaving a huge number of people who are denied access to justice.

The Law Society has not conducted research on these disenfranchised litigants. It should do so. Surely today there are no good reasons why a litigant is prevented from coming to an arrangement with a third party to assist in the financing of litigation. Indeed many of us are in favour of promoting a scheme whereby the investor takes a share of the damages. If all parties are properly and independently advised, why shouldn't this be allowed? It would at least give an opportunity of justice to those who presently cannot afford it.

Yours sincerely,
RHORY ROBERTSON
(Solicitor),
Swepstone Walsh,
9 Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2.
February 28

From Dr Iain Bowen Rees

Sir, Anthony Scrivener's condemnation of the *Daily Mail* for labelling three young men as the murderers of Stephen Lawrence (Law, February 25) concludes with the interesting but unlawful proposition that if newspapers are really concerned with justice they should assist the relatives of the murder victim to start civil proceedings for damages.

It is still part of our common law that, save in exceptional circumstances, a third party may not give financial assistance to a litigant where that party has no legitimate interest in the proceedings. It would be hard, if not impossible, for a newspaper to claim that financing civil proceedings on behalf of the Lawrence family amounted to a legitimate interest.

Litigation for most of us is very expensive. It is beyond the means of

Yours faithfully,
MARGARET BENTON,
Head, Theatre Museum,
16 Tavistock Street, WC2.
February 28

Letters should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be faxed to 0171-782-5046.

From the Chancellor of Lincoln Cathedral



COURT CIRCULAR

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
March 4: The Queen held an investigation at Buckingham Palace this morning.

The Rt Hon John Major MP (Prime Minister and the Lord of the Treasury) had an audience of Her Majesty this evening.

The Lady Susan Hussey has succeeded the Hon Mary Morrison as Lady in Waiting to the Queen.

March 4: The Prince Edward, Trustee, this morning held a Meeting of the Working Committee of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award International Foundation at Buckingham Palace.

March 4: The Princess Royal, President, British Knitting and Clothing Export Council, later visited Riva Kartikam, Devonshire Mews, London.

CLARENCE HOUSE
March 4: The Lady Angela Oswald has succeeded Mrs Michael Gordon-Lennox as Lady-in-Waiting to Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother.

KENSINGTON PALACE

March 4: The Duchess of Gloucester, Patron, Parkinson's Disease Society, visited the Head-quarters at 22 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1.

Her Royal Highness this evening attended a Reception in aid of Marriage Care at Drapers' Hall, Throgmorton Street, London EC2.

HATCHED HOUSE
March 4: The Duke of Gloucester, Patron, Parkinson's Disease Society, visited the Head-quarters at 22 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1.

Her Royal Highness this evening attended a Reception in aid of Marriage Care at Drapers' Hall, Throgmorton Street, London EC2.

Her Royal Highness, President, Animal Health Trust, this afternoon attended a Corporate Fellowship Scheme Luncheon at Buckingham Palace.

Today's royal engagements

The Princess Royal will open the new Edinburgh Healthcare NHS Trust's Care of the Elderly unit at Ferryfield House, Edinburgh, at 11.00, and as Patron of the Moreton Foundation, will preside at the Retirement Lecture at Pentlands Science Park, Bush Loan, Penicuik, at 12.30. Later, as President of The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, will attend an English Symphony Orchestra concert by courtesy of Sir Trevor Titchett at St James's Palace at 7.00.

The Duke of Kent, as President of the Automobile Association, will attend a committee meeting at Norfolk House, Basingstoke at 9.30am.

Princess Alexandra, as Patron of Home-Start, will visit the Kingston scheme, 132 Kingston Road, New Malden, at 2.30.

Receptions

NEW COLLEGE
Mr Michael Morris, Deputy Speaker, was the host at a reception held last night at the House of Commons on behalf of Dr S. Martin Gascoole, Director of New College, Northampton, and Chairman of the Standing Conference.

Young Musicians Symphony Orchestra

Mr Robin Hay, Chairman of the Young Musicians Symphony Orchestra, gave a reception last night at the Barbican Centre before the orchestra's 25th anniversary concert.

Lecture

GLOZIERS' COMPANY
Ms Wendy Evans delivered the annual lecture of the Gloziers' Company last night at Gloziers' Hall. Later, Mr Malcolm Tosh, Master, accompanied by the Wardens, received liverymen and their guests at a reception and supper.

Today's birthdays

THE HON DAVID ASIY, CH, 85: Lady Elizabeth Bassett, Extra Woman of the Bedchamber to Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, 88; the Right Rev Thomas Butler, Bishop of Leicester, 57; Admiral Sir Simon Cassell, 69; the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, 70.

Mr Jim Dowd, MP, 46; Earl Grey, 88; Anthony Hedges, composer, 66; Archbishop Bruno Heim, former Apostolic Pro-Nuncio, 80; Mr R.E. Herbert, former president, Royal Horticultural Society, 63; Mr Richard Hickox.

DEAN MONTFORT - 78: Dame Barbara, 80; Mrs Barbara, 78; the Revd Canon Jonathan, a beautiful daughter, Emily Jane - a widow, 78.

DASHWOOD - On February 24th 1997, in Capestown, to

Joanne Dashwood and Dean Hutchins, a son, Jason, 20.

DE MONTFORT - On February 26th

in Johannesburg, to Jenny (née Bell) and

Gerhard, a son, Sebastian, 21.

DE WYNN - On February 28th

at The Portland Hospital, to

John and Barbara, a son, Alexander Marcus, a son, Alexander Marcus.

SURGE - On 25th February

to Michael (née Bell) and

Andrew, a daughter, Polly Theodore, 3, sister of

John and Barbara, a son, Alexander Marcus.

DE WYNN - On 26th February

to Jenny (née Bell) and

Gerhard, a son, Sebastian, 21.

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One regulator would stop crossed wires

Walk down the corridors of the Federal Communications Commission in Washington DC and find yourself staring into the open-door hearing room. A mini-courtroom drama is in progress — a bench of quasi-judges, rapt audience, lawyers, all intent on the contest of the day: cable rates, radio and television licences, satellite broadcasts, dial-a-porn telephone lines.

Strong voices in Britain are calling for a counterpart to what the United States gave itself in 1934: a single agency to regulate telecommunications and broadcasting together. If Britain had an FCC, or Ofcom, as some would call it, our overlapping tangle of regulators could be eliminated. Ofcom, the Independent Television Commission, the Radio Authority, the Broadcasting Standards Council (soon to be renamed commission), the radio branch of the Department of Trade and Industry — maybe even the BBC's Board of Governors. Trying to regulate through separate agencies what technology has brought together makes increasing nonsense. Questions like how to ensure that the main supplier of digital set-top boxes does not shut the door to other broadcasters, or should British Telecom be allowed to sell television entertainment to mass audiences down the telephone line, would be easier to tackle. In Washington, the FCC offers one-stop regulation for all of these. It is headed by five politically appointed commissioners, of whom no more than three can be from the same party. Reed Hundt, the Democratic chairman, is too clever to criticise another country's communications regulations. But he can see that the British approach is "very managed". "You think about which way you want to go and then decide the rules on how to get there. We wait and see where the players want to go. Who can say who's going to be successful?" In favour of the American way, he says, is the certainty that "all predictions are wrong".

The FCC has learnt its pragmatism the hard way. During the 1970s and 1980s it practised "creative regulation", trying to guide the direction technology would take. The result, says Hundt, was a "colossal mistake". Cable television was overprotected, the national television networks were discouraged from investing in programme production, the telephone and computer industries, local and long-distance telephone services were forcibly kept apart.

Now all the effort is focused on lowering the regulatory barriers and allowing the technologies to converge — without discouraging competition and diversity. The increasing number of new media possibilities have allowed the FCC, prodded by Congress's recent Telecom Act, to permit ownership of radio and television stations in

larger clusters. But the FCC still prides itself on some success in preventing excessive cross-media ownership.

Hundt, a communications lawyer, thinks the excitement about the entrance of The News Corporation (parent company of The Times) and Echo into domestic satellite television distribution was premature. "We still have to look at it," he says. The hopes of offering 500 channels by satellite, including local television, cuts across an FCC rule that no satellite service may broadcast local programmes into areas where these are available on cable or rooftop aerial.

As a Democrat, Hundt acknowledges that the marketplace approach does not serve all the television audience. His Republican predecessor, Mark Fowler, said memorably: "The public interest is the public's interest."

In contrast, Reed points to children's television: "The marketplace will not serve kids because kids don't have any money."

Since January the FCC has imposed new rules to try to carry out Congress's mandate to improve children's television. US television stations must submit quarterly evidence of compliance.

Yet any American attempt to regulate the content of what appears on TV inevitably runs up against the constitutional protection of free speech. Broadcasting, in this sense, is "speech". The only reason that it is not as free from regulation as the American press is that broadcasters need licences to use airwaves, a public resource. They therefore must submit to some governmental conditions in exchange for access to the air. But not many.

The FCC's new rules on children's programmes look pitifully weak. All they insist on is half an hour a week of a regularly scheduled programme of informational or educational content, to be shown between 7am and 10pm.

Can't the FCC take a more qualitative approach to raising standards? Hundt says no. All the commission can do is design numerical formulas and brandish the threat of removal of licence.

With technology moving so fast, the advantages of the FCC's approach are obvious. Yet it can do nothing to enliven the blandness of network television, spoilt by the frequency of commercial interruption and lack of variety. Last week when NBC showed *Schindler's List* without a commercial break, 63 million people watched it.

The inability to impose cultural values on broadcast television is one argument against a single British regulator for communications. The inevitability of the press being drawn into statutory regulation is another. But there is no excuse for not combining all other communications business under one official roof, especially if its technical sophistication is high and its doors are open.



BRENDA MADDOX

High profile and dynamic, 26-year-old Brenda is looking for an individual, aged 24-28, to be a partner in her business, which offers a view to agents and individuals looking for a career with experience and career opportunities.

PAUL SAMOTY'S 0171 436 8818

MEDIA, SALES & MARKETING

GOOD news for the playwright Alan Bennett who recently denounced *Classic FM listeners as "Saga louts"*. *Saga*, the over-50s travel firm, which spends around £400,000 a year with *Classic*, has withdrawn all advertising from the station after it jacked up its rates.

Saga director Tim Bull said: "Advertising on *Classic* is no longer cost-effective."

Morley silenced

ONE CRITIC was conspicuous by his absence when colleagues of the late *Daily Mail* critic Jack Tinker trod the boards at the London Palladium to celebrate the writer's life.

Sheridan Morley, who reviews shows for *The Spectator* and the *International Herald Tribune*, has the imposing physique that could dominate a stage and a voice to hit the back rows of the Drury Lane.

But he was not invited to take part. Could it be his application for Tinker's job was considered by some to follow rather too hard upon the diminutive scribe's death? Whatever the reason, Charles Osborne, who was formerly *The Daily Telegraph's* man in the stalls and who organised the tribute, says: "At the request of those close to Jack, it was decided not to ask Sheridan to take part."

TV cooks up a storm

RARELY has the power of television been more clearly illustrated than in *Delia Smith's Red Nose Collection* cookery programme last month, when she was joined by the comedian Dawn French to make chocolate muffins. The BBC2 show triggered a run on the mini-muffin baking tray featured.

In Sainsbury's stores throughout the land, the trays started selling like, well... hot cakes. A supply that should have lasted six months has already sold out. Customiser service lines have been so busy with calls for the baking trays that the powers-that-be have had to rush an advance order from the only manufacturer. Remaining baking trays, meanwhile, are being rationed among the stores to avoid outbreaks from frustrated would-be muffin-makers.

Sugar and Spice

WORKING with the Spice Girls won unexpected benefits for Jennifer Saunders, actress and mother of three



JASON LOWE
Dawn French and Delia Smith triggered a run

daughters aged between five and 11. As part of this month's Comic Relief TV extravaganza, Saunders formed a lookalike band, called the Sugar Lumps, with Dawn French, Kathy Burke, Lulu and Llewellyn Gidley. The two bands teamed up last month to make the official Comic Relief single, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, the proceeds of which will go to the charity.

Saunders says: "Despite all the amazing people I've worked with, working with the Spice Girls has finally earned me the respect of my children."

Judgment day

THE controversial former High Court judge James Pickles is to join News Bunny and topless-darts players on *Live TV*, possibly Britain's least-viewed but best-known cable station. The judge is to star in *Trial TV*, presiding over mock trials based on real-life cases.

The series features cases from all over the country, such as the Dartmoor villagers trying to prevent a Thai massage salon from opening.

The protagonists from each side will be invited to submit their case, and the judge will

deliver his learned verdict. Pickles, who retired from the bench in 1991, says: "even though our courts are open to the public, relatively few people will ever have attended a trial." Unfortunately for Pickles, even fewer people are ever likely to watch *Live TV*.

Launch fling

BIZARRE, the new magazine about the world of the weird, has run into trouble even before going on sale. The inaugural issue was pulped after an article was found to be in contempt of court. So yesterday the magazine — the latest title from John Brown Publishing, which produces *Viz* — relaunched itself.

To mark the affair, an octopus-throwing competition took place in Battersea Park, south London. The creatures were dead before the first tentacle was flung, but the event incurred the wrath of animal rights groups. The RSPCA says: "Because they were dead, there was no cruelty, so there was nothing we could do. But it is in very bad taste and might encourage people to behave inappropriately with animals."

Octopus-throwing is apparently big among Canadian ice hockey fans who hurl the inky creatures onto the rink when their team wins.



Jacob's Club: going high-tech

Admen under fire

ADVERTISING

AS THE political temperature rises and a possible change of government looms, the Advertising Association has conducted a MORI survey of 100 anonymous MPs' views of the advertising industry and its work.

It seems that the industry still has serious image problems among more than 40 per cent of the Labour Party members surveyed. Among their objections are that advertising "does not work in the public interest", it "exploits markets", "distorts needs" and "misleads consumers".

One Labour backbencher even declares: "(Agencies) are guilty of telling more lies than politicians", while another says: "They are unscrupulous, ruthless, grasping and duplicitous."

The association has brushed off the findings. "The official Labour Party is extremely positive about us and does not endorse these worries," says Andrew Brown, the association's director-

general. "The point is not to be confused between individual, anonymous opinions and official policy."

DAVID OGILVY, the co-founder of Ogilvy and Mather, one of the world's top ten agencies, publishes an updated version of his 1978 autobiography on March 20.

The £16.99 hardback, published by John Wiley, tells his rags-to-riches life story, from childhood poverty and his early working years flogging Aga cookers to sums in Scotland to his launching of the profitable O&M.

It also includes some revealing extras about the 85-year-old Ogilvy, who now lives in a 14th-century chateau in Bonnes, France. These include his favourite words (such as eggregious, nubile and ragamuffin).

ONE of the most memorable advertising jingles bites the dust from today, as Jacob's Bakery unveils a new campaign for Club biscuits minus its familiar signature tune.

The slogan "if you like a lot of chocolate on your biscuit join our Club" was created in 1982. Jacob's Bakery's new agency, Euro RSCG Wreck Goss, has created a high-tech campaign which breaks tonight. Sources say it reflects the new "high-tech" Club biscuit, with 15 per cent more chocolate and an improved centre. Nothing is sacred, it seems.

BELINDA ARCHER

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FREELANCE JOURNALIST

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Why the real battle will be fought on our screens

Two young and ambitious correspondents have their eyes on the BBC's top political post, says Michael Gove

The real battle in the coming election will not be between Major and Blair, nor even Portillo and Redwood, but Sopel and Vine. Their names may be only hazily familiar but the faces and voices of BBC political correspondents Jon Sopel and Jeremy Vine have insinuated themselves into the public consciousness and are likely to become more prominent as this interminable election campaign reaches its anti-climax.

The BBC's political team has already attracted the wrong sort of attention this week with an attack on the Corporation's alleged Blairite bias from Tory communications director Charles Lewington in *The Sunday Telegraph*. Both Sopel and Vine might have been in Lewington's mind. The former has written an accessible and broadly sympathetic biography of the Labour leader, the latter is an energetic muscular Christian in the mould of Mr Blair. But, whatever affinities with the Labour leader either might have, the minds of these two consummate professionals during the election will not be directed towards promoting anyone other than themselves.

Both like Tory leadership contenders, will be using the election campaign to position themselves for a job where no vacancy currently exists but whose holder is the victim of an unfair whispering campaign. The job they have their eye on is the most prestigious reporting post in broadcasting — political editor of the BBC. The incumbent, Robin Oakley, who used to fill the same post on this newspaper, enjoys the respect of colleagues in the parliamentary lobby for the range of his knowledge, quality of his prose, scrupulous professionalism and quiet authority.

Oakley inherited the herculean mantle of political editor from John Cole. Cole is England's favourite Ulsterman and the voice the nation turned to in crisis, from Westland to the fall of Thatcher, to be informed of the latest peridy in a suitably authoritative fashion which still had bite — Reith with teeth. When Oakley replaced Cole as another painstaking reporter with Fleet Street battle honours, he sought to emulate Cole's style.

But ever since Oakley arrived at the Beeb he has been, like Juninho at Middlesbrough, a classy player underappreciated by those around him. There was resentment among the corporation's older swells that the post of political editor had gone to someone whose background was in print, not broadcasting. Many Beeb insiders would have preferred Cole's dogged deputy, chief political corres-



Old and new: Britain's favourite Ulsterman John Cole (left) was replaced by Robin Oakley; inset (from top) Vine, Sopel and Sergeant

pondent John Sergeant, to succeed. Some shows, such as *The World at One*, still prefer to have "Sarge" provide political commentary in his firesides. Oakley has proved an authoritative broadcaster, but that has not quelled the critics. There are rumours that after the election elements within the BBC will try to ease Oakley out and the race is already on among his juniors to succeed him. Sopel and Vine are the two most obvious contenders, notable for their ambition, ability and determination to develop a new style of political broadcasting.

The whispers against Oakley have been fomented by a BBC faction who feel that his calm, detached, rational style does not have the breathless appeal of his ITN opposite number, Michael Brunson.

While *News at Ten* has eased itself off the Olympian heights and into the middle market, Brunson has kept the

profile of politics high by adopting a more populist style. His formidable form, mackintoshed against the wind, has become as permanent a fixture in the nightly bulletins as Big Ben. The ITN political editor has managed to carve a suitably large niche for himself with a willingness to preface his reports with a punchy: "In this leak I have just been handed, Trevor."

The direct style, coupled with some genuine exclusives, has impressed some BBC executives who believe politics needs to be dramatised to engage the 1990s audience.

Sopel and Vine satisfy that appetite. Presenters as much as reporters, with Sopel a regular on PM and Vine on Five Live, they have cultivated their own personalities as assiduously as lobby contacts.

They tread subtly different populist paths. Vine has made imaginative use of broadcast resources to grab the audi-

ence's attention. One radio report which has been raised to mythic status began with the sound of blades being whetted in a kebab shop and after a few seconds of blood-chilling effects. Vine's voice broke in to the effect that "The knives being sharpened here in Stavros's Grill are as nothing to those being unsheathed in Central Office..." Vine's reports delight in arresting metaphors, visual and audio.

Sopel's style is more manner, less art. He has thrust himself to the attention of BBC executives with an aggressive approach to story-getting which has unsettled more traditional political journalists. He has acquired a reputation as one of the most lethal lancers in the lobby. Recently, Sopel entertained the Chancellor in the three Michelin-star splendour of Nico at Ninety. A day later, on *The*

World at One, a detailed and explosive sketch of Clarke's mind was broadcast. The accusations attributed to those close to Clarke could not have been more clearly from the horse's mouth.

If there was any doubt as to Sopel's source, the presence of Shadow Environment Secretary Frank Dobson in the same restaurant that lunchtime ensured that the truth would out. Sopel's rush to the studio with his scoop, and the ease with which the source was uncovered, distressed old lobby hands who guard the identity of their informants more closely than the Stasi. His coup, however, earned Sopel the admiration of executives in the Beeb.

For those who want a change at the top there was icing on the *Ches Nico* cake — Frank Dobson's lunch partner was Robin Oakley. The BBC political editor was scooped by his junior.

Oakley's future will prove a pointer to the BBC's future direction — he is a canary in the corporation's mind. If he survives then so will a commitment to traditional political reporting. If he is eased aside, a more assertive tone will replace the measured cadences on which the nation has come to rely.

When truth is bound to hurt people

Fact spells friction when it comes to docudramas, says Patricia Holland

Undoubtedly, if a drama on television or in the cinema is preceded by the caption "this is a true story", viewers will gather in greater numbers and with a heightened eagerness. If *No Child of Mine*, the docudrama of a young girl abused by her family and the care system, had been a fictional film on *Four*, it would hardly have whipped its critics into such a passionate frenzy as we saw in the press last week.

It's OK to imagine the dreadful things that undoubtedly happen occasionally. It's quite different to document them in a drama. This was confirmed by the director, Peter Kosminsky, bruised by the hostile reaction to his film, in a debate on docudramas hosted by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts on Monday. Since the BBC

field QC, who has been closely involved in exposing miscarriages of justice, the detail is less important in such dramas than the expression of a truth that is unpalatable to the authorities. "We live in a society where vision and principle have evaporated, and we need people with courage who will produce this sort of film."

For him, *In the Name of the Father* has an inner truth. This is the truth of commitment, for these are all dramas with a conscience. They set out to right wrongs, to expose the reality of a situation, to express a passionate partisanship — what the best of television has done in memorable programmes from *Cathy Come Home* through to *Who Bombed Birmingham* and *Why Lockerbie*.

And yet... If events are

changed and chronologies shifted for dramatic effect, if some events are overlooked and others amalgamated, an unsympathetic critic may point out that the bigger assertions will lose credibility. Any departure from the facts is the beginning of a very slippery slope. Cinema offers greater scope for this. For instance, *In the Name of the Father* would have run into problems on television, where lawyers have the final say on a programme's content. David Aukin, C4's head of drama, described how "dictates come down from offices I don't normally speak to" for a drama which is based on fact, such as the upcoming *Welcome to Sarajevo*, which deals with the experiences of reporter Michael Nicholson and his bid to rescue a child from the besieged city.

The *Hillsborough* team

felt that the involvement of lawyers was no bad thing.

The checking and re-checking meant that the victims' families could be sure that the programme represented their views.

They said: "We didn't change anything for artistic reasons, and we didn't get too precious about our art. It is possible to make a programme which is true to the facts and still maintain your dramatic integrity."

Biting the hand that feeds them

As the Saturday and Sunday newspapers demonstrate, it is no longer considered un-English to show an interest in food. When *The Times* joined with restaurants last year to offer lunch for a fiver, more than 40,000 readers responded. So serious newspapers can no longer afford to be without star restaurant critics who eat for England and their editors.

As AA Gill, who manages to eat out and watch television for a living with *The Sunday Times*, puts it: "I eat *foie gras* to put bread on the family table." The newest recruit to the ranks, who does not have the same worries as AA Gill, is the newly ennobled Lord Lloyd-Webber, who writes about the restaurants he visits in *The Daily Telegraph* on Saturdays.

So when novelist Will Self, restaurant critic of *The Observer*, bowed out last Sunday, he was given star billing on the front page of the Review. He solved the problem of how to end it all by eating two lunches on the same day, one at McDonald's on London's King's Road, the other at Pierre Koffmann's La Tarte Claire, one of London's three-star res-

PAPER ROUND

Brian MacArthur

Caribbean are fun — but the writing is neither easy nor fun. Delivering a thousand words overnight is hard work and if the words aren't witty or full of useful information a writer will soon be fired.

After years of writing the restaurant column in *The Spectator*, Nigella Lawson found that eating out was no longer a treat. Her palate had become so jaded that she took a six-month sabbatical. Her successor, David Fingleton, takes notes as he eats and asks for the menu when he leaves. Last week he investigated Marco Pierre White's three latest London restaurants. He was uncovered by White as he made his notes and was offered a free drink after the meal. It made no difference to his verdicts. At the Criterion, the £89.49 bill seemed "excessive" for "unremarkable" cooking; at Quo Vadis in Soho the wines were "ludicrous" plays or travailing to the

over-priced" and the bill of £109.41 "outrageous".

Marco Pierre White's reputation is now so high — Gill rates him as the best cook in Britain — that Fingleton's verdict may not affect his bookings. But restaurant critics undoubtedly have power to make or break restaurants. A rave review from any one critic — Jonathan Meades in *The Times*, Fay Maschler in *The Evening Standard*, Lloyd-Webber in *The Telegraph*, Fingleton in *The Spectator* or Gill in *The Sunday Times* — delivers a packed restaurant.

The critics themselves are more modest about their power. Meades's experience, certainly outside London, is that it is unlikely that a damning review can close a restaurant. Gill thinks that word of mouth is the most important ingredient in a restaurant's success — though

that can be swelled by a rave review in a newspaper.

Meades, who is a pretty good cook himself, is more worried that restaurant critics should know about their food and how to cook. Editors would not tolerate a music critic who knew nothing about music. So they should not tolerate restaurant critics who don't know the difference between a *beurre blanc* and a *hollandaise*.

Meades is glad that writers rather than food buffs are writing restaurant reviews but detects a danger that as restaurant critics become star turns, writers will be employed simply to entertain. The job, however, is to inform as well as entertain. "Purely to entertain is insulting to the reader and the chef."

That criticism cannot be applied to the doyen of the trade, Fay Maschler, who has been a critic of London restaurants for more than 20 years. Her star rating has been recognised by a succession of editors, including her present editor, Max Hastings. "Food has become an increasingly important part of journalism," he says. "Fay has a huge following and what she says is taken seriously."



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NEWS

Furore over rightwinger's outburst

The Conservative Party was embarrassed when one of its MPs was heard heap personal abuse on Virginia Bottomley and his Labour opponent as part of an attack on the "dreadful" women in politics.

David Evans, the rightwing MP for Welwyn Hatfield, described the Heritage Secretary as "dead from the neck upwards". He went on to deride Melanie Johnson, his Labour opponent, saying that she had "three bastard children" and had never done a proper job. Page 1

Major takes the may out of May

The Prime Minister paved the way for a six-week election campaign when he all but confirmed that it would be on May 1. John Major told a BBC programme that it was a "fair expectation" that the election would be that day. Page 1

Soccer stalemate

Three soccer stars accused of match fixing were must wait to see whether they will face a fresh trial after a jury failed to reach a verdict. Page 1

Train woman stabbed

A woman was in a critical condition in hospital after being stabbed in the head on a train in Surrey during an apparently motiveless attack. Page 1

Labour U-turn

Labour has ditched its pledge to restore free eye and dental checks under the NHS. Party aides said the question of charges would be reviewed if Labour wins the election. Page 2

Copings with grief

One year after the Dunblane shootings, in which 16 primary school children and their teacher were killed, the victims' parents say they have learned to cope with their grief through meeting every week to laugh and cry together. Page 4

Albanians disarmed

The Albanian Army began to disarm rebels in southern Albania under emergency regulations issued by President Berisha authorising troops to open fire on armed protesters. Page 14

Blackbeard mystery

The almost certain discovery of Blackbeard's ship has raised hopes that the publicity will solve the riddle of what happened to the pirate's skull. Page 6

A welcome in the Hillsides

William Hague, the last bachelor in the Cabinet, is engaged to a Welsh civil servant he calls Jilly Jenkins. The couple fell in love while she was teaching him the words to the Welsh national anthem. The Welsh Secretary said that he will marry Ffion Jenkins, 29, next year. Bookmakers immediately cut his odds on becoming a future party leader. Page 3



Tony Blair welcomes Ben Chapman, the winner of the Wirral South by-election. The Conservatives are now in a minority

BUSINESS

Halifax The building society is considering a share buy-back or special dividend after it floats on the stockmarket in June. Page 25

MFI Shares fell 21 per cent after the furniture retailer warned the stockmarket that growth in sales has almost halved in the key winter sales period. Page 25

Store sale Littlewoods, the pools-to-retailing group, has put its 135-strong chain of stores up for sale. Asda and Tesco were immediately tipped as front-runners for the outlets. Page 25

Markets The FTSE 100 index rose 50.6 points to close at 4357.7. Sterling's trade-weighted index rose from 98.0 to 98.5 after a fall from \$1.6197 to \$1.6170 but a rise from DM2.7425 to DM2.7643. Page 28

Blackbeard mystery Littlewoods, the pools-to-retailing group, has put its 135-strong chain of stores up for sale. Asda and Tesco were immediately tipped as front-runners for the outlets. Page 25

Motor racing Michael Schumacher, who has been twice a formula One world champion, talks to Oliver Holt about the future and his chances of a world championship with Ferrari. Page 44

Double act Cambridge hosts the European premiere of *Widows*, a remarkable collaboration between Ariel Dorfman (*Death and the Maiden*) and Tony Kushner (*Angels in America*). Page 35

Screen struggle The real election battle will be between the BBC political correspondents. Page 23

Crossed wires Brenda Maddox on why there should be a single agency to regulate telecommunications and broadcasting. Page 22

Simon Barnes Sport is an unnatural act and not an animal pastime at all. It is a high product of civilisation, one that is based on the brain's capacity to master natural instinct. Page 44

ALAN COREN The reason motorists are unsafe is that man was originally designed to move at a top speed of 5mph, for which two eyes, four limbs, slow reflexes, and fragile bones were perfectly adequate. But when man invented a tin box his natural kit proved to be so unfitted to cope with this that he began killing himself and his kind in uncounted new ways. Page 16

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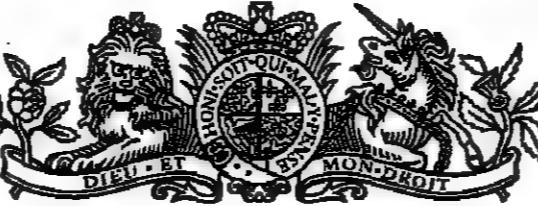
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THE TIMES



INSIDE
SECTION
2
TODAY



ARTS

Ariel Dorfman's new play finds him on familiar ground
PAGES 33-35



HOMES

How to learn the history of your house
PAGE 41



SPORT

Why Schumacher craves a change of pace
PAGES 43-48

**TELEVISION
AND
RADIO
PAGES
46, 47**

WEDNESDAY MARCH 5 1997

Halifax cash pile points to second payout

BY GAVIN LUMSDEN

HALIFAX Building Society, which converts to a bank in June, is awash with cash and needs to dispense with more than £3 billion of surplus capital reserves, it revealed yesterday.

Even before it floats the society is considering opening the coffers to its 8.5 million new shareholders, either via a special dividend or a share buyback programme.

Announcing Halifax's annual results yesterday, Roger Boyes, group finance director, said the society's capital structure was inappropriate for its future. He said: "The money is broadly invested in the money markets where it is not getting a huge return. The task of the

board is to enhance the returns on the money. We cannot rule out returning capital to shareholders. The alternative is to find new ways, either through acquisitions or by investing in organic growth and our existing businesses."

Halifax has built up £6.87 billion of capital reserves, giving it a tier 1 ratio of 14 per cent, double that of most banks and three times the level required by the Bank of England. Although it has declined to enter the fray for Scottish Amicable, Halifax could fund bids for companies as diverse as Northern Rock, Allied Irish, Friends Provident, Perpetual and Mercury Asset Management.

Grant Folwell, deputy chief executive, said that he would introduce a loyalty scheme to ensure an even higher level of support from private shareholders than at Abbey National, which has retained a 45 per cent retail shareholder base since its conversion.

The prospect of a further windfall could tempt a high number of Halifax members to hang on to their shares, barring the entry of institutional investors, such as tracker funds, into the FT-SE 100-listed stock.

Ian Morley, head of derivatives at John Goveit, said that illiquidity in Halifax shares would cause some tracking error but that holders would sell shares eventually thereby easing the situation.

Analysts raised concerns about the company's direction as it revealed a modest 6.6 per cent rise in pre-tax profits, to £1.43 billion. Despite spending

£626 million on discounts and cash incentives Halifax saw its share of net new mortgage lending slipped to 11 per cent (£2 billion), compared with its 20 per cent stake of all mortgage stock.

Halifax said that in the first half it had withdrawn from the intensely competitive remortgaging market. In total it made 210,000 loans, including 70,000 to first-time buyers, with 70 per cent of loans on an interest-only basis backed by endowments or Peps.

Similarly, its share of new liquid savings was 7 per cent (£2.4 billion), well off its 16 per cent presence in personal sector liquid assets.

However, personal loans grew £18 million to £1.09 billion. Profits were also hit by the additional £298 million costs of merging with the Leeds Building Society and conversion expenses, which had reached £153 million.

Jon Foulds, chairman, said the results showed Halifax was en route to being the UK's leading provider of personal financial services.

However, one analyst said Halifax should reduce diversification and refocus on the core mortgage and lending businesses. "With the right capital structure Halifax is saying it could make a capital return of 25 per cent on its core markets. If so, it would do better to concentrate here, although it will probably have to make acquisitions and offer something to shareholders to mop up the excessively high level of reserves."

Pennington, page 27

Pledge by Honda on British operations

BY OLIVER AUGUST

HONDA, the Japanese automobile group, has rejected recent criticism of the British Government by other foreign investors and said it will keep its UK operations even if Britain opts out of the European single currency.

Kenjiro Kato, the European executive vice-president in charge of manufacturing, said: "We operate in many countries, which means in every part of the world we try to avoid currency fluctuations. Therefore, there is no intention to change investment strategy if they join or not."

He emphasised that overall manufacturing costs were not particularly high in Europe. Higher than average costs at the Swindon plant were due to the fact that the plant had not been fully written down rather than currency problems. "The comparative costs are at a slight disadvantage because it's new," Mr Kato said.

Senior executives at Siemens, Unilever and Toyota have recently given warnings of the adverse consequences of staying out of monetary union because damaging currency fluctuations could increase in Britain while it would decrease in Europe.

Mr Kato said that Honda's sales in Europe were growing strongly after the company sold 200,000 cars in 1996. Its Civic and Accord models are mainly responsible for the sales rise.

Power firms face £1.5bn pension bill

BY GAVIN LUMSDEN

POWER COMPANIES face a £1.5 billion bill if a landmark decision by the Pensions Ombudsman is upheld, according to a union representing 30,000 electricity workers. This is a third higher than previous estimates and could thwart Labour's plans for a windfall tax on the industry and endanger thousands of jobs.

Julian Farrand, the ombudsman, last month ordered National Grid to repay £46.3 million of surpluses that it took from the Electricity Supply Pension Scheme in 1992. The company is expected this week to launch an appeal in the High Court against David Laws and Reg Mayes, former employees who complained to Dr Farrand.

Trustees of the National Grid pension fund met on Monday and are also expected to appeal against the ombudsman. "We are in a no-win situation," he said.

man's verdict of "innocent maladministration". However, Tony Cooper, general secretary of the Engineers and Managers Association, to which Mr Laws and Mr Mayes belong, expressed regret that the cases had been brought.

Refunding Mr Cooper's estimate of £1.5 billion would take most of the electricity pension funds over Inland Revenue limits on pension benefits. The result would be either losing the surpluses or their tax status, he said. Forcing power companies to pay back the money would cost jobs and encourage them to switch from final salary schemes to less generous money purchase plans. If the court overruled Dr Farrand's decision, it would probably confer full control of pension surpluses on the companies. "We are in a no-win situation," he said.

Dollar rally lifts shares to record

BY JANET BUSH, ECONOMICS EDITOR

A RALLYING dollar helped London and several other European stock markets to record highs yesterday, and also helped to push sterling to its highest level against the mark for 53 months.

The FT-SE 100 index closed 50.6 points higher, at 4,357.7, just above the record set on February 19. The pound's effective index jumped to a close of 98.5 from Monday's finish at 98.0, rising two pence to DM2.7688 during the session. The dollar hit a peak of DM1.7138, its best level for 34 months.

German shares also profited from dollar strength, which should encourage exporters. In Frankfurt, the DAX index closed in fresh territory above 3,300 points, boosted particularly by a rally in car shares.

The dollar is profiting part

ly from the view that the American economy may be strengthening and that the argument for higher US interest rates is becoming more compelling. Yesterday's American economic statistics supported this view, with sales of new homes in January jumping to the highest level for nearly 11 years.

In addition, the Conference Board, a leading business research group, said its index of leading indicators designed to forecast economic activity six to nine months ahead, jumped 0.3 per cent in January, its biggest increase for eight months. This added to Monday's survey by American purchasing managers, which showed that manufacturing activity had accelerated in February.

Markets, page 28

MFI value slides on winter warning

BY FRASER NELSON

SHARES in MFI lost 21 per cent of their value yesterday after the furniture retailer gave warning that growth in sales has almost halved in the key winter sales period.

The company said that revenue growth had fallen to 7.3 per cent over the last 16 weeks, against the 15.7 per cent growth achieved in the six months to October. The shares fell 40p, to 156½p, their lowest level in more than a year - wiping £241 million from MFI's market value.

John Randall, chief executive, said that the company had no idea what was causing the slowdown. He said: "The

growth in our first half came virtually out of nowhere. I couldn't tell what had caused that increase, and I'm not sure now why it has gone down."

Mr Randall said that MFI would have been well placed to gain from any growth in spending. "The business is in much better shape than it was last time," he said. "If there was something out there, I can see no reason why we should not have our fair share of it."

Although the Homeworks MFI stores traded well in the quarter, sales slipped in unconverted MFI stores, still the majority of the UK portfolio. The 69 stores in France lifted



John Randall is unsure why MFI has gone off the boil

revenue by 10.7 per cent on a domestic level, but this became a decline of 7.2 per cent after conversion to sterling.

The City was stunned by the warning, and analysts marked MFI profit forecasts from £40 million to £76 million. A Charterhouse Titney analyst said: "We were looking at January and February with a great deal of optimism. Now we see that improvement in the housing market is not following through into consumer spending. Joe Public has not exactly got his hands stuck in his pockets, but it seems he is not spending money doing up his house."

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Commercial Union	83.50
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Barclays Life	86.00
Friends Provident	37.81
Friends Provident	88.99
Black Horse Life	41.58
Black Horse Life	101.68
Scottish Amicable	46.38
Scottish Amicable	108.00
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□ Dilemma for our mutual friend □ A way forward for one British grocer □ Gas gets more competitive

THE Duchess of Windsor was wrong. It is perfectly possible to be too rich or too thin. No one could accuse the Halifax, the country's biggest building society, of being too thin. But it does seem to be suffering an embarrassment of riches.

The Bank of England has down guidelines on how much banks must have put away for a rainy day. This, simply, is expressed as the relationship between assets, and what would be left in the coffers once all debts were paid off and all loans called in. It is designed to prevent reputable banks — such as Barings, say — going bust.

Don't be so cynical. The Halifax's balance sheet shows total assets adjusted for the relative risk they carry of almost £50 billion. Net capital, the cash potentially left over, stands at £6.9 billion, or 14 per cent of that total, twice the figure regarded as necessary by the Bank. So the Halifax's return on capital is running at 12 to 13 per cent, about half that of those banks among whose number it will be counted after conversion.

Thus to earn the returns the market expects, the Halifax must diversify itself of £3 billion. This may seem weirdly reminiscent of those 1980s dinner party

conversations about how vital it was to have the biggest mortgage you could possibly afford, but it is the way banking works.

Halifax could spend the money on an acquisition, which explains the queue of hopeful merchant bankers now forming outside its head offices. But prices for other societies and life insurers have run out of control. Hence the talk about "repatriating" the cash to members.

The trouble here is that any promise of more goodies after flotation, in the form of special dividends or share buy-backs, is the last thing the company or the City needs.

An 8.5 million-strong shareholder list all refusing to sell would be a nightmare to administer, while the lack of new equity being issued means institutions would be starved of stock.

Great news for members, though, as this will force the price higher in the after-market even before the buy-back or dividend arrives.

One must marvel at the topsy-turvy logic that forces a business

to float in order to end up with more cash than it needs. The alternative might be to use the money to buy market share, by enhancing returns to savers and providing good rates to lenders.

The Halifax spent £600 million on just this last year, in the form of cash-backs and discounted mortgage rates. The excess cash should be good for at least another five years. The trouble is, the new shareholders would never stand for it. You have to be a mutual to get away with that sort of thing.

Littlewoods boxes clever

□ THEY will deny it, but our grocers, despite being in one of the most profitable businesses on Earth, are all locked in the British Box. We may not yet have reached saturation in our desire for new supermarkets, but we are not far off it. Just as the ideal location for a pub is about three streets away from where you

live, the ideal supermarket is a couple of miles away. Anything nearer is in Our Back Yard.

This means any attempt to build new superstores will be met by a stern response from John Gummer at the Department of the Environment, take months, may years, and cost a bomb. But the City is so accustomed to profits growth that any suggestion of a mere slowdown, as we have seen this year, has the analysts reaching for their red pencils. This is why Tesco is trying to read the road signs in Czech and Hungarian, and Marks & Spencer is so keen on Australia and home shopping.

They are all looking at financial services, heaven help them. Now Littlewoods offers an immediate way out of the British Box — 135 shops, three-quarters of them in prime high street locations, but for one buyer only alas. Ideal for medium-sized food stores selling high-margin prepared food, leaving the groovy commodity stuff to the supermarkets on the edge of town. Exactly the market that Marks has pioneered, come to think of it, and available to Tesco or Asda at a very reasonable £500 million, or to Marks if it wants to head off the competition.

So goes the sales pitch. Think of your local Littlewoods, and you might balk at that prime location description, but estate agents have never kept a strict regard for truth. Whatever happens, this is the most exciting shake-up in retail for years, and it will either provide the Moores family with the cash for Freemans, the MMC willing, or for another round of financial legal bickering. Just one doubt arises:

this is the personal initiative of James Ross, the new chairman at Littlewoods out of Cable and Wireless. The family has never shown much patience with outsiders, and the plan might not survive him. An early viewing of the stores is recommended.

Picking cherries in the spring

□ COMPETITION in household gas was meant to be as heavily stacked against the old British Gas as it was in the industrial market. Instead of cumbersome restrictions, however, the idea was that the former monopoly would be hogtied by the long-term contracts it had signed to buy gas at well above today's market price.

British Gas needed to maximise revenue in remaining monopoly areas as long as it could. So the only rule needed to promote rivals in pilot markets was to stop it charging prices below the national tariff unless

there is full competition. Centrica, divorced from the rest of British Gas, has little future without customers and so is not much prepared to sit back and lose them. In the South West, competition is proving more vigorous than first thought. In the streetwise southern stock-broker belt, more powerful competitors such as Scottish Power can hope to make even bigger inroads. Hence Centrica's attempt to stem defections of bigger South West customers, claiming competition is now self-sustaining there.

As the Gas Consumers Council notes, Centrica is striking up expectations elsewhere. Whatever Ofgas decides, the real message for those about to be buried under a blizzard of junk mail from its competitors is: you don't have to switch, because Centrica will cut prices as soon as it is allowed. If Centrica can exchange its bad contracts for its gas assets, it should be able to adjust its national tariff in the light of experience.

The result is not entirely welcome. When everyone picks cherries, poorer customers will have to pay more, as doubtless have long predicted. That is an inevitable, if unpleasant side-effect of competition.

General Accident to lift payout 10% despite profit fall

BY MARIANNE CURPHEY, INSURANCE CORRESPONDENT

GENERAL ACCIDENT announced plans to increase its dividend by more than 10 per cent yesterday and ruled out the acquisition of a UK life company, saying it intends to concentrate instead on building up Provident Mutual.

The shares rose 10.4p to 847.4p despite a £15 million fall in full-year profits to £421 million. The results included a contribution of £18 million, net of reorganisation costs of £16 million, from Provident Mutual, the mutual life insurer bought by GA in January 1996.

Bob Scott, chief executive, said he wants to build up the group's life and pensions operations, and the goal is to increase the proportion of life earnings to a level that covers dividends every year. The proportion of dividend covered by net life earnings in 1996 was 44 per cent.

Mr Scott ruled out any major acquisitions in the drive to expand the business and said that he has no interest in bidding for Scottish Amicable, the mutual life insurer currently being



Scott ruled out acquisitions

Tempus, page 28

CRH to cut bid budget

FROM EILEEN McCABE IN DUBLIN

CRH, the building materials group based in the Irish Republic, expects to cut its £418 million acquisition budget to between £1150 million and £200 million this year.

Don Godson, its chief executive, said: "We do expect a continuing flow of interesting development opportunities in all our regions, but not at the exceptional rate of 1996."

CRH reported a 21 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £193 million for the

year to December. Earnings rose 14 per cent to £40.59p a share. Mr Godson said the group's performance was satisfactory, despite the strength of the Irish pound.

CRH was able to take advantage of the continuing construction boom in Ireland to increase turnover to £1320 million from £1278 million.

An 17.12p final makes a total dividend of £10.2p, up 12 per cent, due on May 12.

Kerry Group on prowl

FROM EILEEN McCABE IN DUBLIN

KERRY GROUP, the food company based in the Irish Republic, is actively seeking new opportunities to complement its existing operations in Europe and America after the completion of the restructuring of its core businesses.

Yesterday the company reported a 19 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £151.2 million on sales of £1.23 billion.

Earnings per share were up 16 per

cent to £26.9p. The company's food ingredients division recorded a 14 per cent increase in sales to £706 million, while sales at its consumer foods business grew to £473 million, from £445 million.

However, turnover in the agribusiness sector slipped more than 7 per cent to £53 million.

There is a final dividend of £2.56p a share, lifting the total dividend 15 per cent to £3.83p, payable on May 26.

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Hotel group finds room for expansion

Thistle stalks growth

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY

THISTLE HOTELS, Britain's second largest hotel group, is aiming to add 2,000 rooms to its hotel portfolio in the next few years as it concentrates on organic growth.

The company, which has 13,250 rooms at 100 sites, also plans to rebrand about 20 hotels under the Thistle name. Capital expenditure will rise from the £52 million of 1996 to £55 million this year.

Thistle, which is 46 per cent owned by New Zealand-based Brierley Investments, un-

vealed a 7.3 per cent increase in pre-tax profits, excluding exceptional items, to £60 million. Exceptional charges of £88 million resulted from the revaluation of the estate. Overall turnover increased 8.5 per cent to £290 million.

Thistle shares fell 8p to 98p, with analysts disappointed that the results were not as strong as those of the company's rivals. There was also concern that the rising pound could hit overseas bookings. Thistle, formerly known as Mount Charlotte Group, floated in October, priced at 170p, payable on May 23.

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Shares squeezed higher as the signs stay positive

GROWING optimism about the outlook for interest rates and another positive performance on Wall Street enabled investors to squeeze prices sharply higher to close at another high.

After hitting a best 4,359.1, the FT-SE 100 index finished just a shade lower with a rise of 50.6 at 4,357.7. Prices were marked higher at the outset after a 41-point leap in the Dow Jones industrial average overnight. Another opening rise in the Dow yesterday provided further impetus.

But with just 835 million shares having changed hands by the close of business, it was apparent that stock shortages had combined with selective demand for the leaders to squeeze the market higher.

Brokers say there is unlikely to be a rise in interest rates ahead of the election. This view was underpinned by the short end of the gilt market, where prices rose ahead of today's monthly economic meeting. It has also been reinforced by the subdued money supply and a drop in the purchasing managers' index. The market remains cautious ahead of Friday's US employment numbers.

BTTR was the best performing stock in the top 100 with a rise of 13p at 2551p. Brokers were excited by news of the link-up between its Brook Hansen electrical drives subsidiary and Danfoss Drives, a part of Danfoss Group, Denmark's largest industrial conglomerate. This creates business with turnover of more than £1 billion. Brokers say there is still plenty of scope for improvement in the BTTR share price.

There was also plenty for shareholders to cheer about at Grand Metropolitan as the price rose 61p to 40p on the back of an upbeat trading statement. The group played down reports that its Burger King chain was about to plunge into a price war after hefty price cuts by McDonald's in the US. George Bull, chairman, told the annual meeting that the price cuts would only apply to combination meals. All three main divisions at GrandMet were trading well and the group expected first-half profits to be ahead of last year.

A disappointing second half trading statement left MFI Furniture 40p down at a low for the past year of 1561p. The group saw a slowdown in



Barry O'Connell, left, and Peter Woodall, of Canadian Pizza, down 11p after 50 per cent higher profits and acquisition talk

like-for-like sales to 7.1 per cent over 16 weeks, including the important winter sales, and compares with a 13.5 per cent increase in the first six months of the financial year.

The shock waves from MFI's statement and the news that Littlewoods, the privately owned store chain, had put stores up for sale, hit other retailers in the sector includ-

ing Carpetright, down 201p at 604p, DFS, 141p off at 595p, Kingfisher, 9p lower at 681p, Argos, 51p down at 687p, and Marks & Spencer, 91p cheaper at 488p.

A bid approach from Wiggins Group lifted Tomorrows Leisure 3p to 91p. Wiggins is offering one of its own shares for every share in Tomorrows Leisure, valuing the deal at

£16 million. Wiggins, 1p off at 10p, already holds 25 per cent of the company.

Mackie International plunged 521p to 131p after bid talk, announced last week, were terminated.

The market gave a lukewarm reception to maiden figures from Thistle Hotels. Profits came in at 660 million but it plunged into the red

shares of market high-flyer British Biotech came under pressure, losing 4p to 25p ahead of figures today. GKN, also reporting this week, rose 14p to 950p.

□ **GILT-EDGED:** The improving outlook for interest rates was clearly reflected in the bond market where shorter-dated issues outperformed the longer end.

The March series of the long gilt rose 111p to 11121/4 as the number of contracts completed totalled just 12,000 contract were completed, while 37,000 were recorded in the June series.

Longer-dated issues closed below their best of the day, reflecting a poor response by US Treasury bonds to comments made by Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Fed, to Congress.

Treasury 8 per cent 2015 eased a tick to £10521/32, while Treasury 8 per cent 2000 was three ticks firmer at £10311/4. NEW YORK: Shares were steady as investors turned to technology, oil and bank stocks, while merger activity kept the transport sector higher. By midday the Dow Jones industrial average was 5.38 points higher at 6,924.30.

Note the heavy turnover on Dana Petroleum, with the price firming 4p to 204p as almost seven million shares changed hands. It is now just 11p shy of its high for the year. Brokers say that there is scope for improvement. The group is said to have been on the lookout for acquisitions. An announcement may be due.

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Conrail war over

The four-month deadlock in the bidding war for Conrail in America has been broken. Conrail has negotiated an increase in the bid by CSX Corp to \$115 a share from \$108, valuing the rail company at \$10.3 billion. Norfolk Southern, a rival bidder that conceded victory to CSX, will be able to buy about half of Conrail's assets from CSX.

TDG slips

The BSE crisis last year delivered an extra £1 million in profit for Transport Development Group, the logistics and hire company that saw orders to store suspect beef rise. But pre-tax profits fell to £25.2 million (£36.1 million) after the loss of a distribution deal. Earnings rose to 17p a share (16.5p), but the dividend stays at 9.5p, for a final 5.5p.

Darby rises

Darby Group, the manufacturer and distributor of tempered safety glass, made pre-tax profits of £2.1 million (£955,000) in the year to December 31. Earnings were 6.1p a share (5.3p), and a final dividend of 1.2p makes a total of 2.2p (2p).

Upbeat Cala

Cala, the housebuilder and commercial property developer, saw pre-tax profits at £2.7 million (£2.11 million) in the half year to December 31. Earnings were 4.2p a share (3.28p). The interim dividend is 1.3p (1.3p).

Brewery link

Brewery interests in Wales were merged yesterday when SA Brau of Cardiff acquired Crown Buckley of Llanelli for an undisclosed sum. The combined company has 165 pubs.

Clubs deal

Waterfall Holdings, the snooker clubs operator, has bought 12 clubs from Regal Inns for £4.85 million.



John Robinson, left, and Chris O'Donnell yesterday. Profits were at the low end of analysts' forecasts

Smith & Nephew warns of more wounds in US

BY ERIC REGULY

SMITH & NEPHEW, the healthcare and medical equipment company, warned the market yesterday that it expects another tough trading year in America, its biggest market, as customers continue to demand price reductions.

The company said that prices, on average, fell by 3 per cent in America during 1996, with orthopaedic implants and woundcare products suffering the sharpest falls.

John Robinson, chief executive, said: "We have to assume that prices will decline by a similar amount this year."

Prices are falling because customers, notably hospitals,

are banding together to form large buying groups. These HMOs, or health maintenance organisations, are using their market clout to demand volume discounts.

Mr Robinson thinks that the pressure on prices will ease somewhat in 1998. In the meantime, underlying margins are being maintained through cost cutting and sales growth. In the year to the end of December, sales rose by 6 per cent to £1.06 billion.

Pre-tax profits were £182.2 million, compared with £180.4 million, while earnings per share were up by 2 per cent to 11.21p. The results were at the low end of analysts' forecasts.

The strength of both sterling

and the dollar compared with the main European currencies depressed profits by 1 per cent and are likely to reduce earnings by about £13 million this year if they remain at their current levels.

Mr Robinson said new products should underpin longer-term growth. Smith & Nephew expects to launch Dermagraft, the first "off-the-shelf" bio-engineered skin, in the American, British and possibly Scandinavian markets in the second half of this year.

The product initially will be used to treat diabetic foot ulcers, a market potentially worth £1.5 billion a year.

Smith & Nephew is also developing a bio-engineered

cartilage that could be used to repair the damaged knees of athletes. The company is aiming to launch it in 2000.

Mr Robinson, 56, is to become part-time chairman in July, replacing Eric Kinder. The new chief executive will be Chris O'Donnell, 50, who had been Mr Robinson's deputy. Mr O'Donnell joined the company eight years ago and had been responsible for developing its wound management business.

A final dividend of 3.71p, to be paid on July 2, makes the total dividend 6p, up from 5.65p. The shares closed at 184.1p, down 6.4p.

Tempus, page 28

Anger over Renault plan to shed jobs

FROM ADAM SAGE
IN PARIS

RENAULT, the French carmaker, was facing industrial conflict last night as unions denounced plans to shed almost 3,000 jobs in France.

The move came less than a week after Renault said it would close a Belgian assembly plant at Vilvoorde, near Brussels, with the loss of 3,100 jobs.

As the recently privatised company prepares to announce losses of more than Fr5 billion for 1996, sources close to the management confirmed reports that Renault would cut 2,764 French jobs this year. Renault will also transfer 1,032 positions within the group, the sources said.

The plan sparked a storm in France yesterday, with unions saying that a one-hour stoppage at Renault plants on Friday would herald widespread strikes.

Daniel Richter, of the socialist CFDT union, said: "We hope this is the beginning of a long period of labour struggle at Renault all over Europe."

Franck Borotra, the French Industry Minister, who urged Renault to open negotiations with unions, came under pressure to reconsider the firm's early retirement proposals for 40,000 staff. Under the scheme, which was rejected by the Government last week, Renault said it would replace the older workers with 14,000 young job-seekers.

The political row echoed criticism of Renault in Belgium, where Jean-Luc Dehaene, the Prime Minister, has led calls to save the Vilvoorde plant. Belgian unions have called for a boycott of Renault cars and political leaders say they will take legal action against the company.

Renault argues that it has little choice but to streamline. The 1996 results will show a loss for the first time in ten years and, in January, its sales in France fell 20 per cent.

Louis Schweitzer, chairman, says Renault has to cut car prices if it hopes to increase its share of the European market.



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CONTINUED STRONG PERFORMANCE

1996 RESULTS

	1996 £m	1995 £m - restated
General Premiums	4,356	4,227
Life Premiums	1,848	1,508
Underwriting Result	(212)	(130)
Net Investment Income	549	515
Life Profits	108	79
Operating Profit before Taxation	421	436
Profit Attributable to Ordinary Shareholders	500	382
Operating Earnings per Ordinary Share	61.9p	66.5p

- Operating pre-tax profit of £421 million following record fourth quarter.
- Continued underwriting profits in UK.
- Contribution from life operations increased by 37%.
- Underlying results in United States and Canada show continued improvement.
- Underwriting profits in both New Zealand and Asia.
- Final dividend of 22.85p per share making a total of 34.25p per share for the year, up by 10.5%.
- Net asset value up 4% to £3,506 million, equivalent to 675p per share. Solvency margin 79%.

Bob Scott, Group Chief Executive, comments:

"We are confident that we can continue to be successful in the competitive and fast moving environments in which our life and general insurance businesses operate."



General Accident

THE ABOVE INFORMATION IS DERIVED FROM THE 1996 AND 1995 AUDITED ACCOUNTS

General Accident plc, World Headquarters: Pitheavlis, Perth, Scotland PH2 0NH
A copy of the results is available on Internet: <http://www.ga.co.uk>

Regional brewer to be valued at £109m

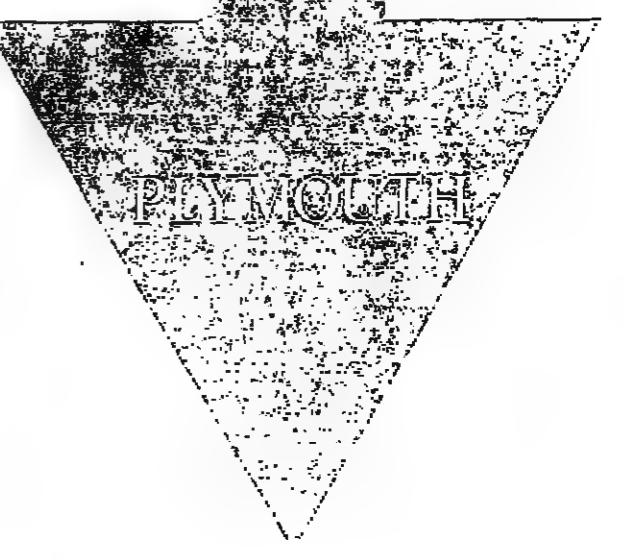
USHERS of Trowbridge, the regional brewing company, yesterday set a flotation price of 10p a share, valuing the company at £109 million (Alasdair Murray writes).

Ushers, which owns a brewery and 542 pubs, hopes to raise £38 million from the float that will be used to strengthen the balance sheet and improve the company's potential for expansion. After the placing, Roger North, chief executive, will hold shares valued at £4

million, while Peter Humphrey, production manager, will control shares worth £3.1 million. The directors will own 3.4 per cent of the total capital worth £9 million.

The venture capital backers, led by Schroder Ventures Fund and SBC Equity Partners, will own 49.3 per cent of the company after flotation.

Ushers made profits of £16.4 million in the year to October 31, 1996. Dealings are expected to commence on March 10.



THE TIMES UNIT TRUST INFORMATION SERVICE



■ CIRCUS

A sensation in Paris, Philippe Decoufle's surreal and mesmerising *Decodex* makes its British debut



■ POP

Paul Rodgers turns the clock back in Shepherds Bush to the delight of his middle-aged fans



■ JAZZ

Homage to the late Ronnie Scott comes in a fine gig by Jean Toussaint's New York Vibes



■ TOMORROW
Nicholson and Caine in *Blood and Wine*, plus reviews of all the other top new movies

Donald Hutera meets Philippe Decoufle, whose stunning circus-theatre *Decodex* opens here this week

Ringmaster totally over the Big Top

When *Decodex* opened in the autumn of 1995, Paris was in the middle of a transport strike. Even so, Philippe Decoufle's magic cocktail of choreographed circus-theatre, staged at Bobigny's Maison de la Culture on the city's northeastern edge, was a triumph. Those who couldn't drive got there by bike, on foot, or hitched a ride. The two-month show was an instant sell-out.

The Paris Métro is now running smoothly, but history has otherwise repeated itself: *Decodex* returned to Bobigny in January for four weeks, and by the second night all of the seats had been snapped up. In between, the show has toured throughout Europe to box office and critical acclaim.

But, despite such success, the kaleidoscopic delights of *Decodex* will stop spinning immediately after its performances this week in the Woking Dance Umbrella festival. Or, as Decoufle succinctly puts it: "After that, *Decodex* goes to the garbage."

It is unlikely that the average rubbish bin will have been visited by such delightfully strange refuse. Try to imagine Jules Verne and Lewis Carroll devising a three-dimensional picture-book at the Bauhaus, then deciding to take a break under the Big Top, getting lost, and winding up inside a precarious arch instead.

Working with the set designer Jean Rabasse (the visual wizard responsible for the peculiarly beautiful look of the films *Delicatessen* and *The City of Lost Children*), and the supremely inventive costumier Philippe Guillotin, Decoufle has compiled a stage catalogue of surreal marvels. The outcome is a visionary mélange of abstract movement, illusions, gags, acrobatics and Jack-in-the-box discoveries. At heart, though, *Decodex* is a paean to both the limitations and the potential of the human body.



When you do things very precisely, you can speak about crazy ideas

PHILIPPE DECOUFLÉ

earned Decoufle an international reputation for imaginative flair. His (and Rabasse and Guillotin's) cornucopia of weird, wacky wonders was like a cross between Hieronymus Bosch and Bucky Berkeley for the 21st century.

"Before that I was not considered a choreographer by people who do dance," Decoufle says. A thin, bespectacled man with fashionably spiky black hair, he is casually

clad in jeans and black sweater. Only the luxurious purple scarf swaddling his neck hints at the flamboyance to be found in his work.

"There is a movement of boring dance in France, an intellectual thing," he continues. "It's very strong. There are beautiful things sometimes, but it's boring. For these people I am like a clown. I should go to a circus, because I'm not an artist."

"Since the Olympics, it changes. People now respect me more. Critics are more prudent; they take care more often what they say. Perhaps they now understand that I could be like a bridge between the large audience and the research laboratory.

"Still, they sometimes say my creations are a bad thing — empty, commercial, like video clips for dance. But it's my generation, so why not?"

Decoufle was born in Paris in 1961, to a sociologist father and a mother who is an environmental journalist. At 15, after training in both drama and circus skills, his desire was to be a mime. He studied with Marcel Marceau, and later spent a year in New York on a scholarship with the American dance-theatre magician, Alwin Nikolais.

While there he broadened his artistic horizons via classes in modern dance — and dance video — with the likes of Merce Cunningham. His own subsequent film/video work, running the gamut from pop promos to arthouse dance shorts, has netted him a clutch of international awards.

"Now," he says, with a hesitant neutrality that sends boasting out of the window, "I am perhaps the most popular young choreographer in France."

Decoufle's source of inspiration for *Decodex* is a 1970s book, *Le Codex Seraphinianus* by the Italian artist Luigi Seraphini. Decoufle

stumbled upon it in New York. "This book is completely crazy," he says. "Seraphini one day decided to begin it. He was in a little room. He closed his door for two years. People were bringing him food. He did that book, and it's a masterpiece."

"It's written in a language which doesn't exist, so you understand nothing. But there are a lot of drawings everywhere. For me, I discovered that when you do things very precisely, you can speak about anything, about completely crazy ideas."

He tears off a corner of the

paper tablecloth and squeezes it greedily. "You can speak about that, and if you do it in a beautiful way it can be spectacular. It can be *marvelous*."

Decodex starts with a warm-up duet between a Dumbo-eared, deadpan funny tall guy and a little platinum-haired flea of a gamin. All along it capitalises on Decoufle's infatuation with the tension between miniaturism and gigantism. "I try to follow a way from the very small to the very big," he says. "Going from the microbes to plants, to parts of the body, to the planets and movements of things in the sky."

"The show," he adds, almost as an afterthought, "is also a trip inside the human body." Hence Guillotin's costumes: some feature externalised representations of human bones, muscles and organs, while others — with pleated elephant trunks or spotted Hoover-type tentacles, fringed flippers and transparent, Saturn-style rings — suggest goofy versions of what can be studied under a microscope.

Three years ago Decoufle's Compagnie DCA was accorded a 12-year contract by the Parisian suburb of Saint-Denis. There, in a converted boiler room, he develops his

work. "More and more I want to make visual things, like a phantasmagoria," he says. "I think I go away, slowly, from dance. In two years I am going to choreograph a show for Cirque du Soleil; it's interesting for me to work for a big circus."

"After that I would like to direct musicals on film, because right now there is nothing modern there and I think I can touch another audience. And I love cinema. It's one of my passions. Modern dance, no."

• *Decodex* is at the New Victoria Theatre, Woking. 01483 761144 from tomorrow to Sat

Bebop a lulu

ONE of the defining moments of the upsurge of interest in jazz in the mid 1980s was provided by the appearance of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers at London's Shaw Theatre, jamming with a number of the country's up-and-coming musicians, Courtney Pine and Gail Thompson prominent among them.

Blakey's minor saxophonist on that occasion, Jean Toussaint, later settled in England, and has become a stalwart of the London jazz scene. For this concert, he was joined by two other Blakey alumni, trumpeter Terence Blanchard and pianist Mulgrew Miller, in a

JAZZ

New York Vibes Queen Elizabeth Hall

band completed by bassist Reginald Veal and drummer Lewis Nash.

Toussaint has become something of a local favourite during his decade in the UK, and just how thoroughly he reciprocates this feeling was immediately demonstrated by his choice of subjects for his Arts Council-commissioned compositions.

One for Ronnie, a strident hard-bop theme in the Messengers' mould, was dedicated to the late Ronnie Scott; *Glimpse from a Double-decker* and *Piccadilly Fanfare*, both suitably bustling, impressionistic pieces, showed off Toussaint's knack of writing immediately attractive themes packed with just enough subtly displaced accents and rhythmic twists to challenge his soloists.

Blanchard, a fluent, pure-toned trumpeter, responded with typical brio, imbuing the Toussaint pieces with irresistible pep and bounce, and almost stealing the show with a superb feature, *You Don't Know What Love Is*. Miller's sly solo comments on Toussaint's tunes, and his idiosyncratically jaunty trio rendition of *If I Should Lose You*, confirmed his growing reputation as one of the most individual piano voices in the music.

The rhythm section had all the snap and control customarily associated with the city of their band-title. But it was Toussaint who starred. His is one of the most pleasing tenor tones around: warm when required, but always vigorously muscular.

CHRIS PARKER



One of the creatures that inhabit the mind of Philippe Decoufle and the stage of *Decodex*, a huge success in France

Massive swing to old labour

PAUL RODGERS is the singer Tony Blair wanted to sound like when the Labour leader was an aspiring rock star in a university band called Ugly Rumours. Whether Blair would still feel the same if he had witnessed his hero at the Shepherds Bush Empire is doubtful. You don't need to aspire to running the country to feel deeply disconcerted by an audience of men in their forties playing air guitar.

The former Free frontman is about as relevant to current musical trends as a 1970s socialist manifesto is to new Labour. Rodgers's old band first entered the charts in the week Harold Wilson lost the general election to Edward Heath, and the world has changed dramatically since — except for Rodgers. As Blair contemplates taking Britain into a common currency, the singer swings a microphone stand around his head exactly as he did before we went decimal.

But Rodgers is in tune with his audience. He sings a

couple of journeman numbers from his solo new album, and then it is down to the serious business. He knows we are disciples of the old school, there to hear those venerable Free classics. Wild cheers greet *The Stealer*, *Fire and Water* and *Mr Big* — and they still sound pretty fine after all these years.

Of course, it is not quite the same as when you were 16

years old. Lead guitarist Geoff Whitehorn is not Paul Kossoff, and sensibly does not try to emulate him.

His tone is fatter and less supple, and he does his own thing solidly, without ever inspiring. The rhythm section of Jaz Lochrie and Jim Copley drives the juggernaut with conviction, and if Rodgers's voice has lost a little of that tough gristle there is still a

flintiness that Blair's Oxford tones could never emulate.

The singer sounded nowhere better than on *Wishing Well*, Blair's own particular desert island favourite. But if things go well on the night of May 1, the Labour leader could be forgiven if it is *All Right Now*, Rodgers's inevitable encore, that he mimes in front of the bedroom mirror before finally turning in.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

Sadly giving back the keys

A House
Dublin

and women in tears by the time the final curtain came down. For these faithful fans, the show probably spelt the end of an integral part of their adolescence as much as it signalled the dissolution of a House's imperfect body of work.

The evening had started in a low-key manner, with a short acoustic set by Harvest Ministers. Local indie darlings Revellino, who count John Peel among their fans, were also on the bill. Their sturdy, if un-spectacular, brand of classic guitar-pop revealed a group as far with the dynamics of melody, vocal harmony and traditional song structure, especially *Radio Speaks* and *Happiness is Mine*, which have the Byrds and the Pixies, respectively, as their tutors. To judge by the critical plaudits bestowed upon their second album, *Broadcaster*, Revellino could yet graduate with chart honours.

Mainstream commercial success eluded A House in an almost Pimpernelian degree.

Their career spanned 12 years, five albums and three record companies, but no little chart success. Between the opening salvo, *Kick Me Again*, *Jesus* (their first and arguably finest single) and the closing stubborn declaration, *I Can't Change* (from last year's swansong *No More Apologies*), cells from every organ of A House's imperfect body of work were re-animated.

The haunting cadence of the bruised *cri de cœur*, *When I Last Saw You*, would put a lump in the most hardened of throats, but Dave Couse's unashamedly confessional mode of songwriting often crossed the line between the profane and the trite, as on *Cry Easliy*, for example.

Couse himself has never harboured doubts about his ability to transform feelings of vulnerability and emotional insecurity into poignant artistic expression. He remains, however, a decidedly affable character by virtue of his acerbic, ironic Dublin wit. Rest assured he will be back in some shape or form to wipe those tears away.

NICK KELLY

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament

TOM SAPSFORD



Age: 21

Profession: Dancer and choreographer.

Standard beginnings: Trained at the Royal Ballet School from the age of 11; joined the Royal Ballet at 18.

Professional debut a washout? He choreographed a piece for Dances for Elephants, a 1994 tour by Royal Ballet dancers to Kenya in aid of wildlife. "I had my dancers wearing 1920s flappers' dresses and moving to music by the Inkspots. But there was a rainstorm

which submerged the stage in about two inches of water."

Second time lucky: His *Odalisque* solo for the Royal Ballet's 1996 Dance Bites tour was respectable enough to earn him a second commission this year (catch it at the Swan in High Wycombe this week; at the Theatre Royal in Bath Monday and Tuesday). "It's set in a rave club backroom, but it's about nightclubs in general. The music is electric guitar and computer-generated tape, kind of grunge. The characters are from the different sorts of club scenes. It's the kind of piece that could never be done at Covent Garden."

Happy in his job? You bet. "A company that gives a 21-year-old 20 minutes of prime space is quite rare. Dance Bites is a chance to try things out. One of the good things about the mini tour is that you get to deal with a different kind of space, one closer to the audience. You get more involved."

Personal agenda: "I am trying to do something that is relevant to people my age, people who wouldn't go to see ballet but would see modern dance. There's a different pace in a lot of the culture today, very rapid. I want to get the feeling of the five-second attention span. I am trying to make a ballet work like that: short and rapidly changing."

What about his own attention span? "I take great joy in sitting down and channel flicking on the television. There is such a strange, odd combination of things that if you keep going all night you will see the most bizarre things. There is an art to channel surfing. You can make up a whole programme just by channel surfing. I can play Beavis and Butt-head all by myself."

DEBRA CRAINE

PREVIEWS FROM 14TH APRIL OPENS 17TH APRIL '97

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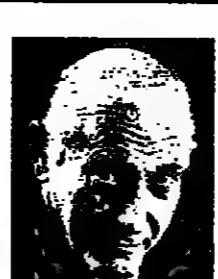


■ THEATRE 1
Meeting of minds: Tony Kushner and Ariel Dorfman collaborate on the writing of a new play



■ THEATRE 2
The mind-set of the middle-aged lady is explored in an Irish play, *Women on the Verge of HRT*

THE TIMES
ARTS



■ MUSIC
Georg Solti conducts in Manchester, and gives his approval to Bridgewater Hall



■ OFFER
Special prices for a remarkable staging of *Faust*: see the Theatre Club panel for details

Deep in the Country

THEATRE: The families of Chile's 'disappeared' find a dramatic voice in Cambridge; plus reviews

Back from the vanishing point

Ariel Dorfman tells Daniel Rosenthal about the long genesis of his play *Widows*

Ariel Dorfman took just three weeks to write *Death and the Maiden*. So it seems hard to believe that he should have required seven years and assistance from another dramatist to refine an earlier play, which also focuses unerringly on the victims and villains of Latin American dictatorship.

Yet in 1988, the Argentine-born author was deeply dissatisfied with the initial stage version of his novel, *Widows* — so much so that he agreed to rewrite it with a man he had never heard of, Tony Kushner, the New Yorker on the brink of international success with his AIDS epic, *Angels in America*.

The compelling product of their collaboration was first performed in Los Angeles six years ago, and finally receives its European premiere in Cambridge tonight, in a Traverse Theatre production directed by Ian Brown.

Like *Death and the Maiden*, *Widows* is set in an unnamed Latin American country at a time of uneasy transition from totalitarianism to democracy. Where the former derived its power from the experiences of political prisoners and their torturers, *Widows* gives voice to the mothers, wives and daughters of "the disappeared", the thousands snatched from their homes by the secret police in Chile, Argentina and beyond.

In Machado, a town where every man has disappeared, two battered, unrecognisable male corpses materialise in the river. Sofia Fuentes, an elderly peasant, claims them as her missing husband and father; bringing herself and, eventually, all of the waiting women into conflict with a conscience-stricken but implacable army captain.

Dorfman has been "obsessed" by the disappeared since 1973, when General Pinochet's coup in Chile forced him and his young family into exile. "Democracy has returned to Chile, but I still have friends who are missing," he says. "The women in *Widows* experience the worst horror imaginable: not knowing if your loved one is alive or dead."

The defiant old woman and the quasi-mythical river which gives back the dead first appeared in Dorfman's 1976 poem, *Identity*. Two years later, writing in Spanish, he began to expand the story into a novel. He transplanted the action to



Ariel Dorfman's *Widows*, in collaboration with Tony Kushner, receives its European premiere tonight

1940s Greece to give it a *Crucible*-like distance from more contemporary horrors, and thereby give the book a better (though unrealised) hope of appearing under a pseudonym in Chile, where his work was banned.

In 1986, he returned the action to Latin America for a stage adaptation, which was premiered in Fort Worth, Texas, two years later, winning a best new play award. But even after numerous rewrites, Dorfman felt

something was fundamentally wrong with his play. *Death and the Maiden* would prove much easier to write because he was "not adapting something which already worked in another form"; with *Widows*, he remained "too enmeshed" in his Spanish prose narrative to produce effective drama in English. Hence, at the suggestion of director Bob Egan, the introduction to Kushner.

At first glance, they seem an

unlikely pairing. "Tony is wholly North American and rooted in the theatre; I'm a bilingual Latin American who's spent most of his life on prose and poetry," says Dorfman. "Ariel writes very fast, like a dynamo; I work slowly and am hugely undisciplined," says Kushner. Politically, however, they had similar preoccupations. Kushner admired Dorfman's anti-Pinochet activism and had joined Amnesty

International demonstrations in New York, marching to the Chilean Embassy with the photograph of a disappeared girl around his neck. Dorfman recalls how they also "shared common ground aesthetically, both believing that political theatre must not simply inform and denounce, it must engage the audience's imagination".

Kushner found *Widows*, the novel, "immensely dramatic, with a simplicity of narrative that resembles Greek tragedy" (it contains deliberate echoes of *The Trojan Women* and *Antigone*). "I wrote a stage version which was more argumentative than Ariel's. He thought it interesting but wanted a more collaborative process.

"We spent seven days at his home in Durham, North Carolina, working more intensively than I've ever worked before or since. I typed and Ariel paced. We'd write a few lines, read them aloud, then write some more. We changed the opening and the whole rhythm. Whenever we got stuck, we devised solutions that differed from what either of us had originally advocated." Dorfman says Kushner freed him from his personal involvement in the story: "Tony was enormously helpful. He was the play's midwife."

Widows, "by Ariel Dorfman with Tony Kushner", opened in LA in 1991, but its evolution was still incomplete. The remarkable simultaneous triumphs of *Death and the Maiden* and *Angels in America* meant both authors were too busy to give *Widows* the additional rewrite Dorfman wanted. Kushner eventually said: "Ariel, it's your play, you should do what you want with it."

Dorfman was finally spurred into action in 1993 by a phone call from Brown, expressing his desire to stage *Widows* in Edinburgh. He made some of the dialogue "more magical" and introduced a partially autobiographical narrator, a Latin American exile who "witnesses the action from afar". At last, he had reached what might be termed a *Widows* peak.

Kushner looks back on the collaboration as "a great experience", but it remains the only writing partnership of his career. Dorfman, describing himself as "extremely flexible", continually juggles projects, several of which have involved his two sons. With Rodrigo, 30, he recently finished a play satirising Hollywood. With Joaquin, 18, he has completed a film script called *Playing it Cool*. "I helped Joaquin to develop the central character," he explains. "Let's say I was his Tony Kushner."

• *Widows*, supported by Barclays Stage Partners, is at Cambridge Arts (01223 503333), tonight until Saturday. Oxford Playhouse (01865 798600), March 11-15; Newcastle Playhouse (0191-230 5151), March 18-22; Traverse, Edinburgh (0131-238 1404), March 25-April 6

CONCERTS

Only project

BBCPO/Solti
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that, however playful the first movement might be, Shostakovich's last symphony is neither an intellectual tease nor, like the Ninth, a cheerful evasion of serious issues. For him the heart of the work is its funeral *Adagio*, where the expressively liberated and eloquently played cello solos said it all. The rest of the work fell into place round that definitive experience. The ending, though consolatory, was also eerily and uneasily unreal.

The item at the centre of this elegantly planned programme of Mussorgsky and Shostakovich was the latter's orchestral version of the former's *Songs and Dances of Death*. Although the arrangement might be disproportionate to the scale of the songs, it is certainly true to their sound. With a singer as well equipped as Sergei Alexashkin to take advantage of the situation, it also adds a powerfully dramatic dimension to the comparatively modest ambition of the original.

GERALD LARNER

Edge of the abyss

Philharmonia/
Dohnányi
Festival Hall

and movement and, although Dohnányi's tendency to clip a rhythmic wing or two showed itself at times, the amassing of the fearsome diminished chords which leads to the movement's denouement was concentrated enough to bring the music to the very edge of the abyss.

The focus on the woodwind as an occasional and independent band of serenaders had been cleverly anticipated in the choice of Mozart's C minor Piano Concerto K491 before the interval. Murray Perahia is clearly falling in love with this repertoire all over again.

This was a performance of exceptional beauty, subdued yet incisive, and quietly confident enough to free the slow movement to sing out in utter simplicity, and to take a bold, decisive lead in the finale's complex variations.

HILARY FINCH

Crushes at the end of passion



Eileen Pollock, Marie Jones and Dessie Gallagher examine the woman's lot in love

What goes through the heads of the middle-aged women who rush up to the footlights at the end of *Heathcliff* in order to be very, very close to Cliff Richard? Well, Marie Jones's *Women on the Verge of HRT* (at the Vaudeville) provides plausible answers.

Women reaching their half-century sometimes find fantasy substitutes for men who are boorish, neglectful or just plain missing. For them, the Cliffs and Daniel O'Donnells are a blend of Prozac and powdered rhino horn: aphrodisiacs that simultaneously lull and thrill.

Jones's sometimes attractive, sometimes samey, play opens with filmed interviews of middle-aged women at an O'Donnell concert. They like him a lot. Then up go the stage-lights and, in a hotel room occupied by two friends who like him still more, one, Anna, has brought a pillow case with his photograph on it. The other, Vera, broods about the husband who abandoned her for a much younger woman, and feels she is fit only for a "sex scrapheap", followed by a sex hospice".

Some of Vera's lines are good, and Jones, who herself plays the part, puts them over with a sultry swagger. But they have become repetitive well before Eileen Pollock's quieter, sadder Anna accuses her of being boring. Since the first act consists of her complaints, Anna's revelation that her own husband has not had sex with her for years, and the appearance of Dessie Gallagher as a young waiter who does conjuring tricks and sings romantic ballads, the interval does not come too soon.

The second act, which whisks the women to a beach at dawn, is rather more eventful and substantial. While a banshee wails offstage, the

waiter transmutes into a series of characters from the woman's native Belfast: rejecting husband, philandering husband, young wife who has chosen an older spouse in the belief he will not abandon her, older wife who is prepared to trade love for the show of marital respectability.

What does this mix of realism and jiggery-pokery achieve? Well, it allows Jones to present a cross-section of disillusion and cynicism. What are women who dislike their men but fear loneliness to do? What kind of sex life can the older woman expect? Why should men find it easier to find new partners than they do? Good questions, I guess; but it is a pity that Darby and Joan figure nowhere in Jones's personal mythology.

BENEDICT
NIGHTINGALE

FOOTBALL has dribbled into the zeitgeist of the chattering classes, so it's hardly surprising that it has become something of a theatrical fetish.

In *Golden Own Goal*, Paul Pavit's farce at the Old Red Lion, the old battle lines between the sexes are invoked when Dave and Stu persuade their respective partners, Nicky and Toni, that they should part during the 1996 European championship — the lads to watch the entire tournament on TV at Stu's place, the women to unpick their marriages at Dave's.

Goals, mostly own goals, are scored by both teams as their relationships fall apart in the heat of the moment. Alastair Galbraith's Dave is a gambling building contractor;

JAMES CHRISTOPHER

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numerous rewrites, Dorfman felt

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You should be a self-starter

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HOBSTONES

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This is the ideal opportunity to join an internationally renowned bank. They are seeking a number of secretaries to join various divisions including emerging markets, equity research and investment banking. You will be looking after your own team which will involve making travel arrangements, working out complex expenses and liaising with clients. If you have GCSE/O level Maths and English, a solid secretarial background with experience within a blue chip firm and an enthusiastic approach to work then this could be the company for you. Please call Sara Armitage.

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You have a unique opportunity to join a small yet prestigious company. You will be the right hand to the Chief Executive which will involve taking decisions, arranging meetings, drafting your own letters and liaising with VIPs. You will need to work on a hands on basis and be willing to assist all members of the company. This position would suit someone who wants to be completely immersed within their job. If you have WordPerfect for Windows, 50 wpm typing, 80 wpm shorthand, experience of working in a close knit team and unlimited energy then please call Sara Armitage.

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PA/Assistant

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City based Executive Search Consultants who are part of the UK's largest group in this field have an opening for an assistant to work with their senior executive. The role offers scope for movement in many areas of the business from general support on a 1-1 basis to handling office management issues. This will include recruitment, organising client entertainment and events as well as co-ordinating office facilities. You should be able to demonstrate the confidence and maturity to liaise with clients at the highest level and the ability to juggle and manage concurrent deadlines. Excellent organisational skills together with 50 wpm and Windows knowledge are essential.

Please call Nicky Gale in the City.

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PA in Sales & Marketing

£21,000
Are you an experienced secretary who likes your boss to value your opinion? If so, this position might be ideal for you. A leading Management Consultant wishes to recruit a dynamic PA to provide secretarial support to 2 Senior Partners within a lively Sales & Marketing Department. You will be encouraged to get totally involved in the day to day running of the department where your opinion and ideas will be frequently sought. 60wpm typing, Word for Windows, Excel and PowerPoint are essential. For an interview please call Millie Pierre-Louis.

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Mad March Temping!

Up to £10 per hour
Every year during March, the Hobstones Temp Team has a mad rush of bookings to cover late winter holidays and early Spring break! To help us meet this demand and to prepare for a busy Summer of temping, join the team without delay. If you have 50 wpm typing, good Windows knowledge and ideally Spreadsheets/DTP too, we would love to hear from you now.

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Experienced, pro-active PA for the Director of this lively insurance company. An intuitive, flexible individual is sought with three years' senior level experience, W4W and spreadsheet skills. A second language would be desirable.

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For Executive Secretarial Positions In The West End, Tel: 0171 224 2820

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Top calibre PA experienced at board level to build a close professional relationship with the MD of this multi-national firm, organising diary, business trips and meetings. 100wpm shorthand and accurate typing.

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Professional secretary with two years' experience and a good level of education sought for a prestigious insurance company. Excellent typing and organisational skills required for this busy and varied role, providing full secretarial support to two managers.

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Exceptionally prestigious company seeks well-educated, career focused PA. Strong skills (inc. Word + Powerpoint) essential.

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Senior Partner needs sure-footed PA to organise hectic, business winning lifestyle. 70% admin role, min 60wpm typing essential.

High Quality Property

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Exclusive estate agency seeks well-educated (A-level or Graduate) secretary. Gutsy, go-for-it personality needed!

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International Brands
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Top UK plc needs skilled secretaries and PAs for personnel, finance, business planning. Good graphics package + min 50wpm.

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£18,000 - Hammersmith
Hugely successful global business seeks bright Sec/PA to work at Director level. Word/Excel needed. Shorthand useful (own use).

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ADMINISTRATIVE: £15,000 - SE1
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Superb opportunity for young people to join first office position. Well established, well known and willing to undertake varied office tasks, including clients handling, telephone, fax, email, filing, etc. Must have helpful, diplomatic, IT skills as an advantage.

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Juliet Morris, left, presenter of *The House Detectives*, says: "History is not just on your doorstep — it is your doorstep." Bidston, centre, and Preston, right, are two of the locations visited by the time-detectives in the BBC2 series



History's coming home

Your home may have a remarkable history. Eve-Ann Prentice reports on an intriguing new television series

Madness, the Black Death and sexual intrigue are the foundation stones on which Anne and David Tombes's house is built. The tales of woe — which make the worst revealed by a local authority search seem trivial — were uncovered when the Tombes had the medieval building in Ledbury, Hereford and Worcester, investigated.

The family were puzzled because a local guidebook described their large home as a tithe barn, even though it appeared to have been constructed around two large open halls. Delving into the past proved daunting until the Tombes' case was taken up by a team of BBC architectural sleuths as part of a six-part television series. David Austin, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Wales, Lampeter, Mac Dowdy of Cambridge University, and Judith Miller, an interior design historian, have investigated six homes in Britain for the series, *The House Detectives*, which began on BBC2 last night.

The Tombes already knew their house, Abbot's Lodge, had been home to local vicars from the early 1800s until the 1960s. The experts went on to prove that the family had been right to question its reputation as an old tithe barn.

In fact, a survey in 1288 by the Bishop of Hereford, known as the *Red Book*, showed that the Lodge had comprised two buildings erected

ed side by side, one occupied by a vicar and the other by a deacon. Further research uncovered a fascinating glimpse of English religious life down the centuries, including details of the less salubrious aspects of some members of the priesthood who lived there.

Juliet Morris, who presents *The House Detectives*, says: "Watch the programmes and you'll be able to unlock the secrets of your own home. Ordinary houses reveal as much about British history and how people lived in the past as grand palaces and castles. The series proves that history is not just on your doorstep — it is your doorstep."

WIN A DETECTIVE GUIDE

READERS may have seen the feature in *Weekend* last Saturday on tracing a house's history. Now you can win a copy of the book, *Be Your Own House Detective*, to be published by BBC Books. It accompanies the series and shows how to gather details of your home's history, offering a step-by-step guide.

First, answer the following question (the answer is contained in the article above): Which six places in Britain do *The House Detectives* visit during the BBC2 series?

Send answers on postcards to House Detective Offer, Midas Public Relations, 7-9 Kendrik Mews, London SW7 3HG, to arrive by next Wednesday. The first 20 with the correct answer will receive the book, which goes on sale on March 20 at £16.99. Usual *Times* rules apply.

In Ledbury, the Tombes have been inspired to continue research into the lives of the vicars who once occupied their home.

The house detectives offer the following advice for anyone wanting to trace the history of their home:

- Visit your local records office and look at old maps to find out when the house was built and how the area has changed.
- View the property from outside and identify the general style, such as Georgian or Victorian.
- Chimneys are strong clues to the date and general history of a building.
- Compare the front with sides and back. If the style differs, there is a chance that it is an early house masked by later changes.
- Look at the general proportions of the rooms. Low ceilings, for example, can indicate medieval and Renaissance origins.
- Make a plan of the general layout — is it one, unified design or has it evolved?
- Look at doors and windows. Although these are sometimes changed or replaced, there are often tell-tale fragments from earlier features.
- When decorating or renovating, note earlier colour schemes and styles of plasterwork.
- Go to the attic and look at the roof. Many features, such as roof timbers, are likely to be original.

Matthew Bond, page 47

Katherine Bergen reports on a real labour of love

Prisoner builds a £50,000 mansion



The dolls' house, at the London Toy and Model Museum

tiled kitchen floor and 40 working lights. Experts say it is worth about £50,000. Mr Wood says the materials cost him £5,000. "But it gave me great pleasure in building, although at times I found it frustrating and never-ending," he says. "and a real sense of achievement when I finally completed it."

• The London Toy and Model Museum, 21-23 Craven Hill, London W2 3EN; 0171-706 8000.

Paul Wood built the house of his dreams while serving a four-year sentence for fraud in Verne prison, Portland, Dorset. He used his time to construct a 16-room Victorian dolls' house and 230 pieces of furniture, made from 25,000 pieces of wood. His tools were a broken hacksaw blade, a small knife and sandpaper.

"I had been building model boats from kits," he says, "and after seeing a picture of Britannia House and other dolls' houses in a magazine, I set about designing what is now Barnard Hall."

The lavishly detailed house, which Mr Wood named after his girlfriend, took 5,000 hours to complete and has just gone on permanent display at the London Toy Museum. Mr Wood admits he took wood from the prison carpentry class and built the house secretly in his cell. "The main problem I had in the beginning was to obtain all the materials and hide them from the prison authorities due to the size of the project," he says. "I knew that otherwise I would not be allowed to build it as the rules state that no model larger than 18 by 12 inches can be made. Therefore, I designed it in four sections — the main section, two side sections and the steps assembly — each piece to be built separately."

Prison authorities eventually discovered the project, but allowed Mr Wood to continue so long as he paid for the wood. The

model also survived vandalism by another prisoner and was completed in 1990.

The model is more than 3ft high and includes four bedrooms, a music room, drawing room, dining room, nursery, study, kitchen, pantry and servants' quarters. It features hinged shutters, roof tiles, hand-veneered floors, an elaborate 60-step staircase, paneling, marble fireplaces, a clay-



All in good time: about £115,000 is being sought for the Clock House, in the grounds of Chippenham Hall, near Ely

It's perfect timing for somebody

CLICK-WATCHER needed: maintenance charges at a home for sale in the grounds of Chippenham Hall, near Ely, Cambridgeshire are reduced by £4 a week provided the owner undertakes clock-winding duty.

The Clock House is part of a listed converted 17th-century coach house and stable block, while its reception room houses the clock's pendulum. The house has three bedrooms, kitchen/breakfast room, study area — and clock room.

About £115,000 is being sought for the property. For more information, phone

IN THE MARKET

James Bedford at Bedfords, 01284 769999.

Sale of the century

A Cheshire woman has decided to move home — as she approaches her 100th birthday. Mary Nolan is selling her five-bedroom period home in Altringham and intends buying a flat in the area. She wants to use the profit from the house sale to pay for someone to look after her. Mrs Nolan does not want to go into a home "because they're full of old people".

Information: Thornley Groves estate agents, 0161 941 4111.

Scotland prices up

House prices in Scotland increased by 3.8 per cent last year and now stand close to

KATIE BYRNE/GREENPEACE

2 per cent in 1996 to an average of £46,000.

Tenants trapped

Men who live in council or housing association properties are increasingly being caught in a poverty trap because of low pay and high rents, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

Because people lose benefits when they find a job, most unemployed "social tenants" would effectively keep less than £4 of every £10 they earned in work, the institute says in a report issued last week. Rents had doubled in the past decade while half of male tenants in work earned less than 10 hours.

"Increasing numbers of tenants in subsidised housing have been caught in a poverty trap, caused by a combination of low wages and rising rents," the report says.

Edinburgh recorded a 10 per cent rise to £70,148, while in Aberdeen, prices increased by 2.1 per cent to an average of £65,428. But in Dundee, prices fell by

the report says.

FOR ANYONE contemplating moving house this year, the Homebuyer Show at London Olympia could be the place to go this weekend. Housebuilders, estate agents, building societies, banks and solicitors will be there to advise. Free seminars include one on "shared ownership explained", which will outline the benefits of buying part-rent, part-buy at a subsidised rate.

New homes by developers, including Barratt, Bryant and Alfred McAlpine, and studio flats, loft conversions and riverside warehouses, will be for sale.

A Greenpeace solar electric kitchen will be washing clothes, cooking meals and making tea.

Admission is free and visitors will be given a comprehensive property guide. The show is open this Friday from 11am to 7pm and on Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 6pm. The nearest Tube station is Olympia and there are several car parks near by.

• Homebuyer Show Hotline: 0990 111590.

A show for the buyer



Let the sun power it: Greenpeace's solar kitchen

AN EXCLUSIVE READER OFFER

FREE previews of *The English Patient*



Readers of *The Times* can get the hottest cinema ticket of the year FREE and enjoy a private screening of *The English Patient*, starring Ralph Fiennes and Kristin Scott Thomas.

We have a total of 25,000 tickets to give away for the exclusive screenings on Saturday, March 8 — the week before it opens in the UK. And there are 115 cinemas nationwide to choose from.

Nominated for 12 Oscars, the film is directed and scripted by Anthony Minghella (who also directed *Truly, Madly, Deeply*) and is distributed by Buena Vista. Based on the novel by Michael Ondatje which won the Booker Prize in 1992, *The English Patient* is an epic film of adventure, intrigue, betrayal and love about four strangers whose diverse lives become inextricably connected.

HOW TO GET YOUR FREE TICKET

Collect the four FREE preview tokens published this week and attach them to the voucher which will appear tomorrow. Present them at one of the cinemas (listed in Monday's newspaper) between 5pm Thursday, March 6 and the close of business on Friday, March 7. Each voucher, with four tokens attached, entitles you to one FREE ticket. Tickets will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. The preview is at approx 3pm on Saturday.

ODEON

SHOWCASE



Love discovered and betrayed: clockwise from top, Juliette Binoche, Ralph Fiennes, and Fiennes in a romantic embrace with Kristin Scott Thomas

THE TIMES
THE ENGLISH PATIENT
FREE PREVIEW
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A range of new homes is offered priced from £269,950 to £359,950
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CITY 2 bed 2 recep 2 bath South
Facing flat approx. 24 hr. Serv.
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Andrew Longmore meets a jockey keen to emulate his father's Cheltenham exploits

Family ties bind Carberry to Festival

The name of Carberry needs little introduction to the Cheltenham Festival. Not, at least, to anyone whose pockets were consistently picked by one of the deadliest combinations in the trade two decades and more ago.

On those March days when the Irish seemed to bring the worst of their weather across the sea along with the best of their horses, Dan Moore and Tommy Carberry formed a partnership as competitive and successful as any in the history of Prestbury Park. Or Aintree, for that matter.

Carberry rode four Gold Cup winners, though only three — Ten Up and L'Escargot (twice) — appear in the record books. On a poignant afternoon 17 years ago, the 12-year-old Tied Cottage ploughed up the Cheltenham hill to give Dan his fifteenth and last Festival winner. His wife, Joan, was in charge that day because, as the world of racing well knew, Dan Moore was in the grip of a terminal illness. Within months, he had died and Tied Cottage had forfeited the race after a positive drug test. "We won it though," Tommy Carberry maintains to this day.

Yet Irish racing dynasties are not so easily crushed. A generation on, Paul Carberry will grace the Gloucestershire hills next week with a handful of promising rides.

Paul, 23, has a long road ahead to emulate the feats of his father and he is acutely conscious, almost embarrassed, by the constant reminders of his pedigree. He is, he says in the way of



Carberry collects his saddle from the weighing room before riding a double at Kelso yesterday. Photograph: Paul Clements

famous sporting sons, Paul not Tommy Carberry and he will do it his way.

"It's certainly been a help having the name of Carberry, but a lot of people have said 'hey, if you're half as good as your father, you'll be okay', and I let it go straight through me. He hasn't tried to influence me, he's left me to learn the hard way."

Paul has managed to equal one record already. With the gloom fast closing on a miserable second day for the Irish in 1993, a horse called Rhythm Section burst away from the Guinness Festival Bumper field to bring renewed glory to a familiar name. Like his father, Paul won on his first ride at Cheltenham, albeit on the flat. The only difference

was the style of the man on

horseback. While Tommy was brought up in the more traditional way of the Irish horseman, with a deep seat and long reins, Paul rides as short as many Flat jockeys. Too short for his father's liking. "I was riding on the Flat at Dundalk one time and he said my backside was a bit high," Paul said.

"But that's just the way I do it, always have. I get a better feel of a horse up there, if I rode long, I'd feel awkward and I don't fall off many."

On the farm outside Dublin where he was brought up, there was little choice of sport. If walking was second nature, riding was a short-head third. Carberry was on his first pony at the age of three; riding a

broken arm put him out for three months at the start of this season, but 37 winners, including a double at Kelso yesterday, for a variety of masters and his strong hand of rides next week — General Command, Alzubai and Squire Silk, along with Cockney Lad in the Champion Hurdle and ADDINGTON BOY in the Gold Cup — confirm his growing reputation as a fearless horseman. "He has a superb sense of pace, a fine racing brain and tremendous courage," Meade said.

Back home, father Tommy will watch with pride if the family name returns to its rightful place in the winner's enclosure and, very probably, shake his head in dismay at the unorthodox style. The rest of us will just have to prepare ourselves for another decade or so of Carberry mayhem.

BANGOR

THUNDERER

2.10 MORPHEUS (nap) 3.40 Ramblers
2.40 True Fortune 4.10 Canbo Gold
3.10 Indian Jockey 4.40 Lough Tully

The Times Private Handicapper's top rating: 4.40 LOUGH TULLY. Cari Evans: 2.40 Cape Cottage.

GUIDE TO OUR IN-LINE RACECARD

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Racecard number. St=spare form. F=fall. P=pulled up. U=uncertain. R=retired. D=deceased. R=retired. Name=Name last used. Age and weight=Age and weight. H=handicapped. V=winning. H=handicapped. M=maiden. C=claimer. C=claimer. D=dead or lame. D=diseased.

2.10 GOING: GOOD TO SOFT TOTE JACKPOT MEETING SIS

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THE TIMES WEDNESDAY MARCH 5 1997

SPORT 45

MARC ASPLAND

RUGBY UNION

Scotland selectors repay players with rubber stamp

BY MARK SOUTER

FOR the first time since the five nations' championship last year, Scotland have named an unchanged side, for the match against France in Paris a week on Saturday. Given the comprehensive manner in which Scotland beat Ireland last weekend, the selectors needed little encouragement to rubber stamp the XV, who will face an altogether more demanding task at Parc des Princes, where France will be endeavouring to secure their first grand slam since 1987.

However, the boost that Scotland received in the record victory over Ireland cannot be overestimated, even though, on reflection, several scores went begging, partly because of the conditions, which, according to David Johnston, the assistant coach, prevented Scotland from showing two thirds of their repertoire. That, together with two successive five nations' victories over France, means that they will be less cowed by the prospect of a trip to Paris than they would have had it been to Twickenham.

Although the turnover in personnel has been marked in the past year, there has been, according to Richie Dixon, the coach, a degree of consistency in team selection this season. The concerns have been more to do with positional changes and finding the right blend in midfield. With Alan Tait and Gregor Townsend in the centre, the selectors appear to have achieved that.

Dixon named an unchanged pack after losing the

Calcutta Cup match and was rewarded with a forward display that surpassed expectation, but he will have noted the manner in which France confronted England in the scrums, and he accepted that this will be an area where the relatively inexperienced Scotland front row, which was not entirely convincing against a robust Ireland trio, will be sorely tested.

That aside, Dixon remains

SCOTLAND
To play France, March 15
R J S Shepherd (Mincos); A G Stanger (Hawco); A V Tait (Newcastle); G P J Townsend (Northampton); K M Logan (Wales); C G Chalmers (Molsons); B W Williams (Wales); D G Ellis (Dunle); M J Stewart (Northampton/Army); R I Wain (Wales); A P Rotherham (Molsons); G W Woff (Molsons); A P Rotherham (Molsons); R Smith (Moseley); P Walton (Newcastle); B P Gammie (Molsons); G Armstrong (Newcastle); D F Cramond (Molsons); D J Hilton (Bath); S J Brotherton (Molsons)

optimistic, pointing out that only three forwards survive from last year, and that it has taken time for them to gel. Glimpses of what Dixon aspires to were evident in the matches against Wales and England, but fell into place against Ireland, who, he said, had "expected to tear us apart up front, but found we turned the tables on them."

As for France, Dixon said: "They are a bit of a Jekyll and Hyde team. They changed their pattern of play when they went 20-6 down against England. They started to play the same game as ourselves, namely taking the game up

through the forwards and mini rucks. France are dangerous when they flow and go."

"There is no team like them when they are playing with confidence, but we have a core of players who played against France in the past two five nations' matches and the World Cup game in Pretoria. The Scotland v France games have produced fast exciting rugby in the past. It was a superb match last season because France did not try to close the game down after we blitzed them in the opening 20 minutes."

Abdelatif Benzaïd, the France captain and blind-side flanker, could miss the match, having sustained a rib injury against England last Saturday. He has been unable to train this week with Agen, his club, and faces a race against time to be fit. With Fabien Pelous, the Dax No 8, also doubtful with an injured right hip, France may have to make significant changes to their back row.

□ Kevin Bowring, the Wales coach, yesterday blamed club rivalry for the number of injuries to the national team that are hindering preparations for the match against England in Cardiff on March 15. Wales have eight players needing treatment, which has forced Bowring to delay naming his team until next week. It had been due to be announced tomorrow. "I blame the intensity of the league programme and the tribalism that exists in the game in Wales," Bowring said.

Action replay: Elliott and Prior close in on Johnsen in the penalty incident that turned the spotlight on the referee at Stamford Bridge

FA ready to replace penalty row referee

BY JOHN GOODBODY

THE Football Association yesterday said that it would replace Mike Reed, the referee involved in the penalty controversy at Stamford Bridge last week, for the FA Carling Premiership game between Chelsea and Leicester City on April 19 if it is asked to do so by police.

There are renewed fears for Reed's safety after his decision to award Chelsea the decisive penalty during the FA Cup fifth-round replay against Leicester.

Steve Double, an FA spokesman,

said: "We have had no formal request from the police, but, should we have one, we would obviously pay heed to any request regarding the safety aspect of things. If the police asked us to change the match official, it would be likely that we would pay heed to this request."

Reed outraged Leicester supporters by awarding a penalty to Chelsea, converted by Frank Leboeuf, their French defender, three minutes before the end of extra time. Even neutral observers were surprised at the decision, which gave Chelsea a 1-0 victory, with Martin O'Neill, the Leicester

manager, describing the penalty award as a "disgrace". Leicester supporters attacked Reed's car as he returned home to Birmingham.

Police have already spoken to the FA, but a police spokesman said that the discussions had to remain confidential.

Part of the area usually allocated to visiting supporters at Stamford Bridge is close to the tunnel used by players and officials, and Reed's safety could be jeopardised.

Leicester have not objected to Reed being in charge of the match. O'Neill said: "It is not our place to make the decision for the authorities. No matter

what our feelings are, we cannot go round picking who is going to referee games."

However, Leicester fans remain outraged. A group of them is suing the FA for £140 in damages, plus expenses, because it is claimed that one of their number had to miss two days' work because he was so distressed by Reed's decision.

The incident occurred when Reed, standing five yards away, judged that Erland Johnsen had been fouled as the Leicester defenders, Spencer Prior and Matt Elliott, converged on him as he sprinted into the penalty area.

Last four go to extremes

BY DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

AS THE grass roots of the English game have an opportunity to flex their muscles at the Rugby Football Union's special general meeting in Birmingham on Sunday, it seems appropriate that teams from the country's extremes should contest the semi-finals of the CIS county championship 24 hours earlier.

If Cornwall win their meeting with Cumbria, at Camborne, their enthusiastic followers can recreate the invasion of Twickenham, on April 19, that was so endearing a feature of their final appearances in 1991 and 1992. On both occasions, crowds of more than 50,000 watched Cornwall as they beat Yorkshire, then lost to Lancashire the next year.

Some 9,000 spectators are expected to pack the ground for Cornwall's first meeting with Cumbria since 1984, though the visitors will have been encouraged by the selection of their captain, Mark Richardson, by the Barbarians for the game against Leicester last month. "It was the greatest thrill of my life and an occasion I'll never forget," Richardson, 36 and an ice cream manufacturer, said.

The West Country also stages the second semi-final, Somerset meeting Northumberland at Bridgwater. Somerset's only championship success was in 1923.

Northumberland rely on the Tynedale forwards, six of

whom have been selected, while Alnwick provide the other two members of the pack and three backs. Paul Singleton, the Percy Park full back, has recovered from injury and will hope to go one better than his predecessors of 1995, who reached the final but lost to Warwickshire.

Mark Venner, the Weston-super-Mare back-row forward, leads Somerset, hoping to add to his previous Twickenham appearance — playing for Richmond in the Middlesex sevens. The county have an unblemished record in the championship this season, though they had to work hard to turn an 18-7 deficit against Hampshire into a 21-20 win in the quarter-finals.

Club commitments involving Redruth and Camborne have deprived Cornwall of a substantial contingent of players; instead, they have turned to Launceston, who provide ten of their team including Danny Sloman, at full back, the county's leading scorer. Launceston are the leaders of south-west division one and their coach, Micky Stephens, has co-operated with Phil Angove, the Cornwall coach, in preparing for the semi-final on Saturday.

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Northumberland rely on the Tynedale forwards, six of

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Ferguson said he has not yet discussed the situation with Hoddle — "it's too far ahead" — but he criticised the summer tournaments, which also features Brazil, Italy and France, the hosts. "I once said to Terry Venables that I wouldn't play friendly internationals because I don't see what benefit you get from them," he said.

"You get players withdraw-

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The summer will be a rest for Manchester United players; it has to be," Ferguson said yesterday. "We start training on the fourth of July, while we could be playing our last game on May 28th. I don't know how we can possibly rest players unless we take those five weeks. I have some

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EQUESTRIANISM

King content to head parade on personality

BY JENNY MACARTHUR

MARY KING, the most successful horse trials rider in Britain last year, was named Equestrian Personality of the Year at the Spillers Awards at the Knightbridge Barracks, London, yesterday.

King, the mother of a 14-month-old baby girl, made up for a disappointing Olympic for a disappointing Olympic in Atlanta with an unprecedented run of success on her return. In less than two months she won the British Open at Gatcombe on her Olympic horse, King William, the Scottish Open and Burghley on Star Appeal and Blenheim on King Solomon.

King, 35, who is seeking a sponsor after Frizzell ended their two-year contract in December, has her sights set on the Badminton in May — the main selection trial for the Open European Championships at Burghley in September. King has only one ride this year, Star Appeal, who gave her an uncharacteristic fall at the first fence last year.

The Horse of the Year prize was awarded to the show-jumper Geoff Billington's Dutch-bred gelding, It's Otto. The 42-year-old Cheshire rid-

er's partner has become one of the most popular horses on the world circuit and was the British team's best performer at the Olympics, finishing sixth in the individual contest.

The Spillers Diamond award, a special award this year, went to the British team, winners of the gold medal and invention of yachts, was killed on Sunday when his plane crashed. Bergstrom invented the Windex, a wind indicator that is mounted on a ship's mast. He was 62.

□ Badminton: The All England open championships will start next week with the lowest ever number of British seeds. There are no singles seeds from the home countries, and only three British players — all women — are seeded for the doubles. The favourite for the men's title, and No 1 seed, is Poul-Erik Hoyer, of Denmark, who is seeking his third successive All England title.

□ Sailing: Lars Bergstrom, a leading innovator in the design and invention of yachts, was killed on Sunday when his plane crashed. Bergstrom invented the Windex, a wind indicator that is mounted on a ship's mast. He was 62.

SPORT IN BRIEF

IT WAS another turbulent day in the life of Sussex County Cricket Club yesterday. Richard Barrow, a member of the club committee, resigned in protest at the departure of five players and a "totally unacceptable" style of management at Hove. In addition, David Smith, the former England and Sussex opening batsman, has backed a scheme put forward by Tony Pignat, another former player, to oust the committee and replace it en bloc. Smith said: "Too many people are making excuses and in any other business they wouldn't have survived: they are obviously making mistakes."

□ Badminton: The All England open championships will start next week with the lowest ever number of British seeds. There are no singles seeds from the home countries, and only three British players — all women — are seeded for the doubles. The favourite for the men's title, and No 1 seed, is Poul-Erik Hoyer, of Denmark, who is seeking his third successive All England title.

□ Sailing: Lars Bergstrom, a leading innovator in the design and invention of yachts, was killed on Sunday when his plane crashed. Bergstrom invented the Windex, a wind indicator that is mounted on a ship's mast. He was 62.

BOWLS

Endurance proving a vital ingredient

BY DAVID RHYS JONES

SUCCESS in bowls should be a reward for skill, not stamina, but the English Women's Indoor Bowls Association (EWIBA) national championships at York, where Sharon Rickman defeated Lynda Jarman 21-19 in the Champion of Champions singles final yesterday, have turned into a test of endurance for competitors who have qualified in more than one event.

Yesterday three of the singles semi-finalists were also engaged in the triples. Rickman and Jarman were required to play four games, which kept them each actively engaged on the green for around 11 hours between 10am and 11.30pm.

Ann Harrison, who was pipped by Jarman 21-18, in the semi-finals, knew how they felt. On Monday she had toiled for 12 hours, rolling her first wood at 10am, and her last on the stroke of midnight. Yesterday she was let off lightly — just nine hours.

The programme, which was devised years ago and has never been revised, is designed to get through eight events in as many days. Each event takes two days to com-

plete, but the task of getting a quart into a pint pot is achieved by starting a new event before the previous one has finished.

It is only when individuals qualify for more than one event that problems arise, and such is the skill of the leading contenders, multiple qualification is becoming more common. Players have been penalised for their own success by being asked to play four matches a day, while others have to wait around until their scheduled opponents are available.

The EWIBA officials, who are not unsympathetic, are determined to address the problem. "We are all players ourselves, and have been looking at what has been happening through the eyes of the competitors," Liz Read, a junior vice-president, said.

Margaret Ruff, the England secretary, said: "We have a heavy programme to get through, and have to make sure that we keep to the timings as far as possible. We will be looking very carefully at future scheduling."

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Little: hostile reception

tion appear to have eased, although Marshall and Clarke, their strikers, could miss the game tonight because of injury. Nottingham Forest, Southampton and Middlesbrough, however, remain entrenched in the danger area.

Forest play Sheffield Wednesday at the City Ground, encouraged by their 1-0 win against Tottenham Hotspur at White Hart Lane on Saturday, while at The Dell, Southampton take on Everton, who have won only once in their previous ten matches and who have only 16 fit first-team players. Joe Royle, the Everton manager, said: "We need new players, we're still looking and I'm hopeful of making at least one new signing before the end of the month."

Middlesbrough's plight at the bottom looks terminal, even though the appeal against their three-point deduction — for the non-appearance against Blackburn Rovers — has yet to be heard.

They must beat Derby County this evening to keep in touch with the pack above. Bryan Robson, the Middlesbrough manager, said: "We've got to start grinding out results."

Little: hostile reception

<p

THE TIMES WEDNESDAY MARCH 5 1997

A tense evening, but that's how it is; or was

Clive James was having trouble with his narrative tenses. The big question was, would he get it sorted out by the end of *Clive James Meets Damon Hill* (ITV)? Answer: not really. But you know that. Ignoring the indefinite present offered by video recorders, the programme became firmly past tense last night. It's over, finished, completed — just like last year's Formula One season. We know what happened. James' challenge, however, was to bring that past back to something approaching life and he did so using that special tense known only to documentary-makers who fear their footage has been overtaken by events, a sort of conditional future past.

"Had Williams secretly fired him already?" he asked conspiratorially, his eyes audibly narrowing. Well yes, Clive, they had — we know that now. Just as we know about the Spa circuit in Belgium:

"If he didn't win there his grip on the championship would grow white knuckles." You don't say.

All this enjoyable bluster, however, disguised a bigger problem. While many journalists would have killed for just ten minutes with Hill, James (who has somehow become the Mr Toad of the grand prix world) had been given two weeks. Private planes, private cars, even a day at Hill's private home in Ireland. Duntpaynt... like a smooth-talking spaniel, James followed him everywhere. The problem was, he'd got the wrong two weeks.

Nothing was resolved while he was there, as our man eventually admitted. "It was the end of my two weeks... three days later he was sacked." And a couple of races later, Hill finally got his hands on the world championship. Despite James' attempts to pretend otherwise, the rest really was history.

But there was probably just

about enough here for Damon devotees. Hill showed off his guitars and gym and talked about his father and driving a Formula One car. "When it's going well, the car is dancing... you feel in touch with the rubber and the road." Georgie Hill, his normally low-profile wife, was rather more fun, recalling the certainty of their first meeting. "I didn't like him and we had nothing in common, but I knew I was going to marry him." And reader, she did.

But having the most fun, of course, was James, never happier than when he's tucked into the slipstream of the ultra-rich and successful. Together they flew to Bulgaria, where "sponsors Rothmans were ready to welcome Damon's help in turning millions of unchained communists into chain-smokers". Later he triumphantly wriggled his considerable frame into the Williams car: "At least I

REVIEW



Matthew Bond

had a racing driver's back-side... even if I had a truck driver's stomach." Works just as well in the present tense too, Clive.

We were firmly back in the past historic for *House Detectives* (BBC2), which for a man badly missing *Time Team* suited me fine. For those who don't remember or never knew, *Time Team* is the Channel 4 series in which a team of archaeologists have three days

to dig a site. *House Detectives* is much the same — without the mud. Three historians have a leisurely five days to discover the origins of a house, helped or hindered (depending on your view of the BBC's portfolio of interchangeable blondes) by Juliet Morris.

Last night's opener, however, was almost insultingly easy, involving, as it did, a striking Edwardian villa in Fulwood, an affluent suburb of Preston.

Edwardian? Didn't that make it less than a hundred years old? It did. Easy-peasy — a couple of trips down to the record office and it was all over.

The flamboyant and turreted house had been built by a John Hodgson, not only a "plumbing, painting and paper-hanging merchant" as a helpful trade directory described him, but also councillor, alderman and eventually Mayor of Preston. Not exactly low-profile then.

Hodgson appeared to have used the house almost as a showroom, incorporating the very latest in stained glass and Anaglypta wallpaper. Once we had ascertained that and what the experts grandly thought of it ("irrational, ostentatious, a little bit vulgar"), interest faded, only to revive right at the end. For having enjoyed more than 20 years of fake Jacobean splendour, Hodgson eventually sold to the real McCoy, the 17th-century Oxendale Hall. Now that really did look like a proper challenge for a team of aspiring house detectives. "Who needs Anaglypta now?" said one. Who indeed?

From the outset it seemed *Inside Story: A Deadly Secret* (BBC1) would be employing the past most imperfect to tell its sad tale. Jan Pink had gone to Cyprus to recover from the divorce that brought her 20-year marriage to an end. There she met and fell in love with a Greek fisherman... and such thoughts disappeared.

Carrie Britton's film was not perfect, in particular being over-reliant on her cousin's well-intentioned but misguided quest for "justice", which turned out to be legally impossible in Britain and unenforceable in Cyprus. We never were told what happened to the fisherman, but by the end of a very touching film that was as much about family as it was about AIDS, Jan, miraculously, was back in the present tense.

BBC1

- 8.00am *Business Breakfast* (54850) 7.00 BBC Breakfast News (T) (65320) 9.00 Breakfast News Extra (T) (5414768) 9.20 *Style Challenge* (4781143) 9.45 *Kilroy* (4413108) 10.30 *Can't Cook, Won't Cook* (54768) 11.00 *News* (T) and weather (6467105) 11.05 *The Really Useful Show* (7079834) 11.35 *Change That* (8554768) 12.00 *News* (T), regional news and weather (7511834) 12.05pm *The Alphabet Game* (5552037) 12.30 *Going for a Song* (6221020) 12.55 *The Weather Show* (7933969) 1.00 *News* (T) and weather (65495) 1.30 *Regional news and weather* (85883414) 1.40 *Neighbours* (T) (1165021) 2.05 *Police Report* (T) (241834) 2.55 *As Time Goes By* Comedy series with Judi Dench and Geoffrey Palmer (T) (T) (5285143) 3.25 *Well Worth a Visit* A journey 300 feet underground to experience coal mining techniques in the Welsh Big Pit Mining Museum (8400740) 3.30 *Playday* (T) (5412650) 4.10 *Popeye and Son* (T) (1411940) 4.35 *The Wild House* (T) (5468327) 5.00 *Newround* (3728230) 5.10 *Star Trek* (7428271) 5.35 *Neighbours* (T) (701124) 6.00 *News* (T) and weather (259) 6.30 *Newroom South East* (T) (21) 7.00 *Noel's Telly Years* 1983 saw comedian Tom O'Connor presenting *Name That Tune* and middle-distance runner Steve Cram winning gold at the inaugural World Athletics Championships (4143) (T) 7.30 *Tomorrow's World* The results of a painstaking operation by American archaeologist Denis van Gerven to reveal why more women than men survived female in the Dark Ages (T) (465) 8.00 *The National Lottery Live* (T) (290834) 8.15 *25 Years of the Two Ronnies* A celebratory compilation (T) (338655) 8.50 *Points of View* (T) (458921) 9.00 *News* (T), regional news and weather (65495) 9.25 *National Lottery Update* (829888) 9.30 *One Foot in the Grave* A sultry widow sets her sights on the cantankerous pensioner Victor (T) (49056) 10.00 *Inlanders* Emotions run high when a Catholic priest kills a young boy in a car accident while rushing from his miscreant's bed. With Julia Ford (T) (90479) 10.50 *Sportsworld* Highlights of tonight's FA Premiership derby between Leicester City and Aston Villa and Middlesbrough v Derby County. Plus the pick of the action from boxing's ABA National Championships in Birmingham (2181679) 12.25pm *Murder on Ice* (1993) with Henry Martin, Helen Shaver and K.T. Celin. A woman is convinced her amorous talkative husband is responsible for the death of his latest wife, and persuades a doctor to help prove her hunch. Directed by Len Peacock (T) (770254) 1.55 *Weather* (8588306)

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The numbers next to each TV programme listing are Video PlusCodes which allow you to record your video recorder instantly with a VideoPlus+™ handset. Tap in the Video PlusCode for the programme you wish to record. VideoPlus+ (™), PlusCode (™) and Video Programme are trademarks of Gemstar Development Ltd.

9.00am *Modern Times: Hong Kong* British and Chinese residents of soon-to-be-relinquished Hong Kong reveal their anticipation of imminent change (T) (678056)

9.50am *A Woman Called Smith* Echobelly's rhythm guitarist Debbie Smith talks about the strain of keeping up a long-distance relationship with her girlfriend (520303)

10.00am *Even Further Aboard* with Jonathan Meades *The Times* columnist looks at modern church architecture (T) (24259)

10.30am *Newlight* (122196) 11.15am *Weather* (820853)

12.00pm *The Midnight Hour* (25902)

12.30pm *Learning Zone: O.U.* Chemistry of Creation 1.00 Chemistry of the Invisible 1.30 Chemistry of Creativity 2.00 GMVQ 4.00 English Heritage 4.30 Unicel in the Classroom 5.00 Health and Safety at Work 5.30 Voluntary Matters

BBC2

- 6.00am *Open University* (7440766) 6.25 *Top-Down Design* (7452501) 6.50 *The Statistician Strikes Back* (284230) 7.15 *News* (T) (7556291) 7.30 *Captain Caveman and the Teen Angels* (8171953) 7.55 *Record Breakers* Gold (T) (T) (3597037) 8.20 *Teddy Trucks* (T) (3882308) 8.25 *Spot* (T) (6228228) 8.35 *The Record* (T) (715321) 9.05 *Jeunes Francophones* (4749291) 9.25 *See You, See Me* (524143) 9.45 *Words and Pictures* (7205679) 10.00 *Playdays* (11360) 10.30 *Numberline* (7222124) 10.45 *Cats' Eyes* (7224679) 11.00 *Around Scotland* (8402360) 11.20 *Music Makers* (9302308) 11.40 *Science in Action* (9273582) 12.00 *Spanish Globe* (555079) 12.30 *Working Lunch* (27834) 1.00 *The Geography Programme* (47760495) 1.20 *Thunderbirds* in France (6607430) 1.25 *Zig Zag* (47772230) 1.45 *Come Outside* (83640563) 2.00 *Teddy Trucks* (T) (27505037) 2.05 *Spot* (T) (27505308) 2.10 *Everyone's Got One* (2418751) 3.00 *News* (T) (9159827) 3.05 *Westminster* (4173340) 3.55 *News* (T) 4.00 *Today's Day* (124) 4.30 *Ready, Steady, Cook* (308) 5.00 *Esther* (2921)

- 5.30 *Seniors Pot Black* Graham Miles v Rex Williams (360) 6.00 *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (T) (562969) 6.45 *Trev and Simon's Transmission Impossible* (141414) 7.00 *Hancock* (b/w) (T) (2785) 7.30 *Counterblasts* Author Nigel Harris suggests that immigrant workers are one of society's vital foundations (T) (227) 8.00 *University Challenge* (T) (8105) 8.30 *Changing Rooms* (5740)



Designer Kavita Desaiwani (9.00pm)

CHOICE

- Counterblast: Don't Face Me In**
BBC2, 7.30pm
Tonight's unfashionable opinion belongs to Professor Nigel Harris of University College London. He contends that far from being the time bomb waiting to explode of political and media cliché, immigration is a good thing. It has huge economic benefits, it releases entrepreneurial abilities and it revitalises cultural life. Harris has surprisingly little to say on his last point, which may seem to be his strongest. He leaves it to fleeting images to remind us of the immigrant contribution to sport and letters. But he argues barely enough on the economic front. Without immigrants, he points out, there would no Marks & Spencer, and he says that the economies of many modern cities would collapse if immigrants were not willing to take essential, poorly paid, jobs.

- Travelog**
Channel 4, 8.30pm
Pete McCarthy rounds off the current series in Costa Rica which, he promises, is a different kind of Latin America. Different, that is, from its immediate neighbours, Nicaragua and Panama, where all sorts of nasty things happen to innocent people. For one thing Costa Rica has long since abolished its armed forces which, as McCarthy shrewdly remarks, virtually eliminates the possibility of a military coup. Warming to the theme, McCarthy suggests that Costa Rica could give banana republics a good name. Whether this placid country will figure much on British holiday itineraries is another matter. As McCarthy presents it, Costa Rica has few roads, lots of bugs and an abnormal amount of rain. But it is a paradise for birdwatchers and the world capital of plastic surgery.

- Modern Times: Hong Kong**
BBC2, 9.00pm

- Lucy Blakstad's film catches the mood in Hong Kong as the handover to China looms by focusing on five of the colony's residents. It is a simple formula but effectively executed, as you would expect from Blakstad whose previous documentaries in this series have covered flamethrowers, weekenders and the habitats of a London swimming pool. Her subjects this time are headed by Tom, an old colonial who lives in a retirement home, has no family left and does not trust the Chinese one inch. Also representing the older generation is Granny Kwong, who fled to Hong Kong to escape a brutal life in China and lives on welfare which she fears will be stopped. We hear, too, from Jimmy, a successful businessman, Kavita, a young fashion designer, and Jo, who spent a year in a Chinese prison after the Tiananmen Square massacre.

- Even Further Abroad: The Absentee Landlord**
BBC2, 10.10pm

- Although he is a self-confessed atheist, as you will soon gather from this film, Jonathan Meades acknowledges the staying power of God and not least his houses. The topic for tonight, therefore, is church architecture but not as you have ever seen it treated before. After the brief excursion into the Gothic, both medieval and Victorian revival, Meades gathers most of his examples — targets would be a better word — from the period since the Second World War. As usual he is irreverent, provocative and contentious and supports his arguments with a fireworks display of verbal and visual gags. As usual too, it is not always clear where he stands. After seeming to heap scorn on most post-1945 houses of God he appears to praise a chapel by Basil Spence that some of might dismiss as a concrete lump. Peter Waymark

HTV

- 6.00am *GMTV* (5618582) 9.25 *Chain Letters* (4748834) 9.55 *Regional News* (T) (5538921) 10.00 *The Time, the Place* (48414) 10.30 *This Morning* (T) (42276430) 12.20pm *Regional News* (T) (7517018) 12.30 *News* (T) and weather (8840501) 12.55 *Regional News* (T) (8625292) 1.25 *Shortland Street* (47767308) 1.50 *Afternoon Live* (1965853) 2.20 *Vanessa* (58917360) 2.50 *Afternoon Live* (271940) 3.20 *News* (T) and weather (2625027) 3.25 *Regional News* (T) (7607688) 3.20 *Totem TV* (5410217) 3.40 *The Tribe* (8974656) 4.50 *The Little Mermaid* (5418834) 4.15 *Dr Xargle* (T) (1412679) 4.40 *Zone* (T) (4559414) 5.10 *Look and Cook* (T) (5695495) 5.40 *News* (T) and weather (960940) 6.00 *Home and Away* (T) (728327) 6.25 *HTV Weather* (897018) 6.30 *HTV News* (T) (855582) 6.50 *Emmendale* Frank struggles to cope with his loss (T) (601211) 7.20 *European Champions League Quarter-Final, First Leg* — Live: *Manchester United* v *FC Porto* Bob Wilson presents coverage from Old Trafford with commentary by Brian Moore (T) (70484230)

- WESTCOUNTRY**
As HTV West except:
12.20pm *Small Talk, Big Talk* (7517018) 12.35 *Regional News* (T) (7607688) 12.30pm *TV* (5410217) 1.00 *The Tribe* (8974656) 1.20 *The Little Mermaid* (5418834) 1.45 *Dr Xargle* (T) (1412679) 1.50 *Zone* (T) (4559414) 2.00 *Look and Cook* (T) (5695495) 2.30 *News* (T) and weather (960940) 2.50 *Home and Away* (T) (728327) 3.00 *HTV Weather* (897018) 3.20 *HTV News* (T) (855582) 3.50 *Emmendale* Frank struggles to cope with his loss (T) (601211) 4.00 *Country Practice* Medical drama set in the Australian outback (625202)

- MERIDIAN**
As HTV West except:
12.55-1.25 *A Country Practice* Medical drama set in the Australian outback (625202) 1.30 *Meridian Tonight* (809788) 6.00 *Meridian Home and Away* (5695495) 6.20 *Meridian Tonight* (809788) 6.30 *Meridian* (5695495) 6.50 *Anglia Weather* (5687474) 6.55 *Anglia News* (8025253) 10.00 *Anglia Live* (846018)

- ANGlia**
As HTV West except:
12.19pm *Anglia Air Watch* (7529853) 12.55-1.25 *A Country Practice* Medical drama set in the Australian outback (625202) 1.30 *Home and Away* (5695495) 6.00 *Meridian Tonight* (809788) 6.20 *Meridian Home and Away* (5695495) 6.30 *Anglia Weather* (5687474) 6.55 *Anglia News* (8025253) 10.00 *Anglia Live* (846018)

- S4C**
Starts: 6.00am *Sesame Street* (47360)

- 7.00 *The Big Breakfast* (56018) 9.00 *Bewitched* (98834) 9.30 *Ysgolion* (470124) 12.00 *House to House* (18688)



RACING 43

Cheltenham braced for return of Carberry mayhem

SPORT

WEDNESDAY MARCH 5 1997

CRICKET 46

Warne and Bevan spin Australia to emphatic win



Football counts cost of wrong result

After seven weeks of evidence, 47 witnesses, 11 hours bar one minute of deliberation, the eight men and three women of the Winchester jury — the numbers that add up to one side in a football match — admitted that they were beaten. They could not decide whether the accused were guilty or innocent of conspiring to fix matches.

The reputation of English football has been left hanging in limbo by the failure of the jury to come to a verdict in the trial of *Regina v Grobbelaar, Segers, Fashanu and Lim*.

No verdict from the 11 jurors means no result for the game ... and so, where we might have hoped this morning that

we would have known whether or not the values of an FA Carling Premiership match are incorruptible, we cannot now be certain.

It is the worst of all possible outcomes for the national game that, after the summer of 1996, had risen to a higher profile in English society than any time in history.

Even the World Cup victory of 1966 did not engage the minds of Parliament, prompt the huge backing that has come from business, or induce the prolonged national euphoria that came with the European championship.

Winchester is a marvellously historic city. To reach the Crown Courts, one walks through ancient court-

yards, and then into a complex of courtrooms as modern as any in the land: it is like a fresh hand inside a medieval mailed glove.

And there, since the trial began on January 14, the integrity of English football was questioned on a daily basis. Outside, at least five television crews found a perch overlooking the entrance to the court. Inside, in the corridors outside Court Room No 3, one witnessed people involved in other criminal trials actually walking up to Grobbelaar and Fashanu and asking politely for autographs.

A tranquil city went about its business and, in the dock, the personification of calculated impassiveness, two of this

country's more famous goalkeepers, a silent gladiator who once scored goals fearlessly for Wimbledon, and a businessman from Malaysia, awaited their fate.

It is estimated to have cost £1 million of public money, given the two years of police work, the engagement of barristers and Mr Justice Tuckey.

Last Thursday, when the judge began his complex and laborious summing up, I sat in the courtroom studying these four men. Each of them had

Rob Hughes on why there were no winners after the collapse of the Winchester trial

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depends upon is that the game is decided in a fashion that cannot be corrupted. A game without a result is anathema; and yet in football the ruling bodies have concocted a process of deciding stalemates on penalties.

The penalty that is awaiting us now is that we cannot be sure of what we think we believe.

The fact that the Crown Prosecution Service indicated yesterday evening that they may seek a retrial means that, not only is the sport put into continued suspense, but that those who have listened to the prosecution and to the defence are not at liberty to discuss publicly the deeply disturbing exchanges.

Remember, the four men have denied everything and the premise of English justice is that a person is innocent until proven guilty.

How I wish that football itself could today be above suspicion. It is a wonderful game, it has given countless Englishmen, and increasingly women, lifelong satisfaction. It has rewarded players with the salaries of film stars, elevated them to a phenomenally high status in society. That attraction must be protected.

At the beginning of his summing-up, Mr Justice Tuckey had chosen a perhaps inappropriate Shakespearian. The judge told the jurors that "a famous football club man-

ager" had once said that football was not a matter of life and death, but that it was more serious than that.

The judge was right to warn his jury that this was and is a serious case for the defendants, serious for football, and serious for all who follow it. But, M'lud, Bill Shankly actually never said all the words as alleged.

It was put to him that football was a matter of life and death. "Nee, son," he responded, "it is more important than that."

Nothing is quite what it seems, nor is likely to seem so innocent in our sporting world again.

Trial abandoned, page 41

ROSS SETTINI

Keane's injury leaves United hoping for best

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

ALEX FERGUSON has almost run out of superlatives when discussing Roy Keane. Can'ta be "inspirational", Giggs may be "brilliant", but Keane is the first name on any Manchester United team-sheet, Keane is Ferguson's "most important player". The thought of losing him to injury is enough to give the United manager an anxious night before his team reacquaint themselves with the European Cup this evening.

It remains the competition that United hanker after the most. Winning league championships has become almost a habit at Old Trafford, even the double is no longer unique, yet Europe's premier club prize has been won just once, in 1968, and this season Ferguson made no secret of the fact that he wanted to win that trophy more than any other.

Indeed, until yesterday, everything appeared to be going to plan. United had run into form, confidence was

bubling and the thought of meeting FC Porto, perhaps the best team of the Champions' League group stages, in the last eight was not as intimidating as it had been when United toiled through the autumn. Then Keane, the foundation upon which the rest of the United side is built, struggled through a fitness test.

If the Irishman did not fail it exactly, he did not pass it either and the ankle injury that is giving cause for concern remains a threat to his place against Porto. "I hoped he would have done better this morning," Ferguson said after putting Keane through his paces. "He didn't do badly, but it did not go as well as we wanted. We will leave things open and give him every chance tomorrow, but I would say he is doubtful now."

Ronny Johnsen, the versatile Norwegian, is standing by to take his place in a team that Ferguson believes is on a high. "The good thing from our point of view is that our

players seem to get better at this time of the year. We didn't have the best of times when we played in the qualification for this stage, but we have gone on since then. We are four points clear in the league and we have gone 16 Premiership games without losing and that is phenomenal."

For their part, Porto have begun to show signs of frailty. After running away with the Portuguese league and brushing aside AC Milan in the Champions' League, their form has dipped a little, including a 2-2 draw with Estrela Amadora at the weekend in a match they would have won comfortably a month ago. Allegations of match-fixing involving their chairman, Jorge Nuno Pinto da Costa, have hardly helped morale either, but they reported no injury worries yesterday and Antonio Oliveira, their coach, professed to having extra motivation to beat the English champions.

"I have read in Portugal that

Mr Ferguson thinks Oporto is a little village and that the Portuguese league is not very competitive," Oliveira said, "but as a player and a national coach I have experienced a lot of games and I don't see much difference in standard between the two countries."

"These little things are all ways that people have of trying to upset the opposition. It's all a game of chess, psychology. I will wait tomorrow to show my big move, but

to my big move, but